

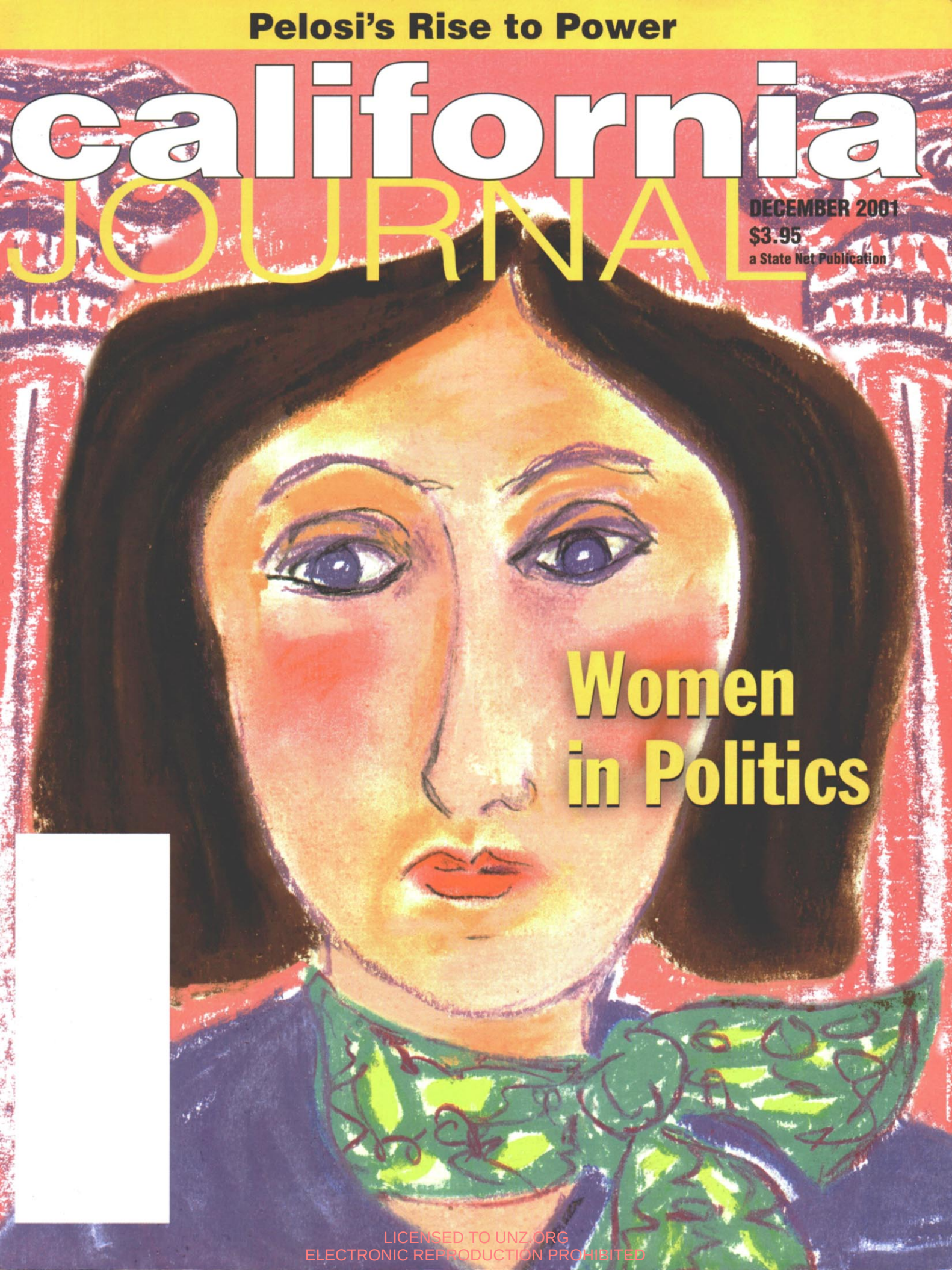
Pelosi's Rise to Power

california JOURNAL

DECEMBER 2001

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**Women
in Politics**



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california JOURNAL

December 2001
Volume XXXII, Number 12

Upfront

Condit surprise;
Team assignments

Talking Points

Good bye Capitol coverage;
Hello junk food in schools

Southern Exposure

Feminine power
By Sherry Bebitch Jeffe

D.C. Perspective

Laura Bush reassures
By Dana Wilkie

Women in politics

For as much as women took to the workplace and became joint wage-earners over the last 30 years, their heightened role in the Capitol should be a given. But while California has been a leader in the women's movement, the number

of female legislators and appointed policymakers still pales compared to men. As women increasingly

step into elected office and work behind the scenes in staff positions, however, they bring with them their own unique brand of power. There is a political style more likely to focus on issues related to families, health and the environment, and one based on consensus building and problem-solving. It's a style that necessarily complements that of men and is increasingly on stage in Sacramento. This month we look at some of the women making a difference in the halls of government, whether elected or working behind the scenes.

Women ascendant

The number of women in elective office still lags behind men, but as more women hold office, the more family and health issues take the spotlight.

By Dana Wilkie



Nancy Pelosi cracks the whip

Nancy Pelosi rises as minority whip in Congress, bringing to the job her unique political pragmatism.

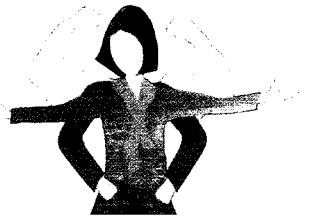
By Marc Sandalow



Who's minding the men?

Three women chiefs of staff manage the Capitol's most politically influential men — the governor, Senate president and Assembly speaker.

By Linda Gledhill



Hilda Solis navigating Congress

A seasoned Latina politician, Solis is sizing up the congressional landscape before she picks her fights.

By Emelyn Rodriguez



Drawing the lines around women

Reapportionment is the last bastion of good-old-boy politics as several assemblywomen found out recently.

By Kathleen Les



Midge Costanza: women voters matter

Once a top aide to President Carter, this avowed feminist is on board with Governor Davis to help connect his administration to women and their issues.

By Philip J. LaVelle



Cover Illustration by Dagmar Thompson

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umbrage



Out-'n-in. The newly drawn 12th Senate District hasn't even held an election yet but already has acquired something of a checkered history. The district supposedly was created as a safe haven for Dennis Cardoza (D-Merced), a termed-out member of the state Assembly and close ally of Assembly Speaker Robert Hertzberg (D-Los Angeles). As such, it patched together Cardoza's home base around Modesto with Democrat-friendly Monterey County — at the expense of another termed-out Democrat, Assembly pro Tempore Fred Keeley (D-Boulder Creek). Keeley's hopes for a cozy Senate district were dashed when Monterey was surgically removed from the coast and attached to the Central Valley. While Keeley fumed over the arrangement, Cardoza decided not to run for the Senate, opting instead to challenge for a congressional seat now held by his former boss, mentor and ally — Democrat Gary Condit, whose own political career has been threatened by scandal. Condit had until December 7 to decide whether to run himself. Cardoza's decision paved the way for another old Sacramento fixture — former Assemblyman Rusty Areias (D-Gilroy) — to resurrect his

political career by running for the Senate district tailored for Cardoza. While a legislator in the 1980s, Areias, who is now head of the state parks department, was a member of the rebellious "Gang of Five" that tried an unsuccessful coup against then-Speaker Willie Brown Jr. (see *CJ*, April 1988), and one of his co-conspirators was Gary Condit. Areias probably thought he would have an easy ride back into the Legislature. And he might have had another Democrat not dropped into the same 12th Senate District primary only moments before the filing deadline. And not just any old candidate.

One with a bit of name recognition throughout that part of the Central Valley: "Condit." Chad Condit — son of Gary.

In-'n-out. One way that a speaker wannabe gathers support is to dish out choice assignments and jobs in exchange for votes. That wasn't part of the scenario when Bob Hertzberg took over back in 2000, however. Hertzberg was a key member of his predecessor's inner circle, and it was expected that he would retain most of Antonio Villaraigosa's leadership team. The same dynamic does not apply to Herb Wesson, the Los Angeles Democrat who will replace Hertzberg as speaker in February. Wesson had to actively campaign for the speakership. So, how did he parcel out the favors? Some Captiol insiders say he may have promised the same job to more than one person. From a leadership standpoint, it would make sense to jettison Hertzberg's holdovers sooner rather than later, because most of that crew is termed out and focused on other endeavors. As majority leader, for instance, Kevin Shelley is one of those responsible for raising campaign cash for the caucus. But Shelley also is a candidate for secretary of state, so he is more intent on raising money for himself rather than for fellow Democrats.

Adding spice? The Secretary of State's Office tried to add some spice to an otherwise dull primary season in San Diego when it posted candidate filing information on November 8, the day after declarations of intent were due for state offices. According to the SOS Web site, Democratic Assembly incumbents Christine Kehoe and Juan Vargas were set to square off in the March primary in the new 79th Assembly District. (Vargas currently represents it; Kehoe represents the neighboring 76th). Unfortunately, no spice. Kehoe's office says she filed for her current, 76th District seat. The secretary of state, they say, goofed. Rats. 🐭

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"The rewards of my work are seeing those I knew would have died otherwise actually becoming self-sustaining and good community-minded individuals. I want to try to get this (gang violence) turned around before it gets too late."

Brian Contreras



Joan Cuadra

"It takes an enormous amount of courage to ask a question, to ask for help, to ask for guidance. And it's important that when people ask that there be somebody there who's sensitive to that person's struggle."

Preventing Violence: Creating Healthy Communities



Constance Rice

"If you don't have freedom from fear and freedom from violence, there are no other freedoms. It is central – to any kind of civic democracy."



PREVENTING VIOLENCE: CREATING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The California Wellness Foundation is proud to honor its 2001 California Peace Prize awardees: Brian Contreras, Joan Cuadra and Constance Rice. Each will receive a \$25,000 grant to acknowledge their work to prevent violence in their communities. Distinguished by their impressive personal and professional accomplishments, these unsung heroes have improved the health of their communities and have shown us that violence can be prevented. To learn more about their work and the Foundation, visit www.tcwf.org.

Brian Contreras, Salinas. Experiencing firsthand the effects of gang violence, Brian Contreras has dedicated himself to raising awareness of violence prevention. For the past 15 years, his leadership has improved the health and lives of gang members and at-risk youth through a program he established, 2nd Chance.

Joan Cuadra, Visalia. For more than 20 years, Joan Cuadra has led efforts to improve the lives of disenfranchised workers and their families in the Central Valley. At Proteus, Inc., she works to improve health and reduce violence in immigrant farmworking communities by providing low-literacy and culturally sensitive services.

Constance Rice, Los Angeles. Attorney Constance Rice has worked tirelessly on issues ranging from housing to violence prevention. A firm believer that America's promise must include everyone, she leads the Advancement Project and Action Group, which builds healthier communities through strategic alliances.



The California Wellness Foundation

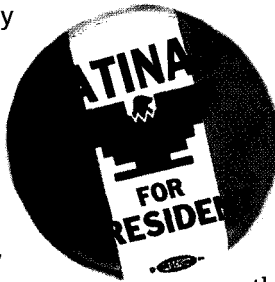
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Lists: Rising Latinos?

The ubiquitous reporting duo of Cokie and Steve Roberts recently wrote a cover story for *USA Weekend*, breathlessly telling the world that the "most dynamic new voice in American politics" is that of Latinos. Never mind that the story has been reported by California media *ad nauseam* for several years, Roberts and Roberts think they are onto something and provide a list of six rising Latino stars — those they believe can become president. No Californian is among the six, although three locals are listed as also-rans: U.S. Representative Xavier Becerra (D-Los Angeles), former Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa and Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. As you can tell, Roberts and Roberts really stretched to find Californians both at the front and back of the alphabet. Here are some others they might have mentioned had they bothered to do more than round up the usual suspects: Hilda Solis, Gloria Molina, Alex Padilla, Louis Caldera, Ruben Barrales, Gaddi Vasquez and Henry Cisneros.



Media: RIP: "California Capitol Week"

It's a given that commercial television looks upon public-affairs programming as a financial loser. Now, that same attitude has seeped into public TV. KVIE in Sacramento pulled the plug on its public-affairs effort, "California Capital Week." A weekly, the show was produced in Sacramento and aired in major cities around the state. The final broadcast was in late October. "Low ratings did it," says co-host Jack Kavanaugh. "It was a decision they had to make in a failing economy." Kavanaugh adds that the program isn't entirely dead; renamed "California Capital Review," it will air "as the need arises." But Kavanaugh and co-host Melissa Crowley both have left the station, compromising its ability to respond to a "need." KVIE also was expected to cover the Capitol for "California Connected," a weekly public-affairs show originating in Los Angeles and scheduled for launch in spring 2002. Now, according to industry sources, the Sacramento station may not be able to provide that coverage. Laments one insider, "Public TV in the capital of California is doing no political coverage. That's too bad." Meanwhile, "California Capital Week" was apparently assigned to a pauper's grave by its colleagues in the media. Except for a small blurb in the "Style" section of the *Los Angeles Times*, no one reported its demise.



Quotables.....

"They've declared economic war on the state and taken our General Fund hostage."

— Assemblyman Fred Keeley on PG & E's proposed reorganization plan submitted in federal bankruptcy court.

Legislative Watch:

Junk food for thought

When moms serve in the statehouse, children's health, their welfare and even the foods kids eat at school elevate in legislative importance. Take Senator Martha Escutia (D-Wittier) for example, who sought to tackle rising child obesity attributed to a steady diet of junk food, something she witnessed firsthand among the children of her Latino and African-American constituents.

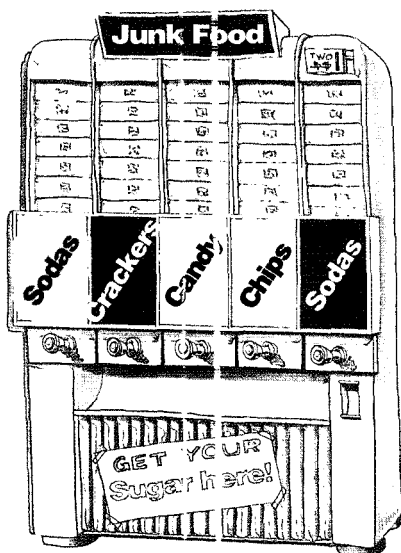
When she found California schools selling high-fat chips and sugar-laden sodas to students in the name of making money, she thought it best they find other ways to raise funds. But even moms who are senators can't always stymie education officials desperate to pump up their budgets. After the Association of California School Administrators caught wind of the bill to ban the sale of junk food and soda from elementary, middle and high

school campuses, Escutia faced the lobbying equivalent of sugar addicts quivering for their next fix.

So the best Escutia could manage for her children and those of her constituents was a prohibition on the sale of high-fat snack foods from elementary campuses. Middle schools may continue hawking sodas after school and the Pepsi truck can still make its morning run

to high schools around the state. That means the Escondido Union High School District — they reel in \$125,000 annually off the sale of Pepsi to students — and the Sweetwater Union High School District in Chula Vista — they deposit \$500,000 a year from Pepsi sales — can still bank money duping students into slugging down some sugary fizz as a thirst quencher.

But moms never give up on their loved ones, and Escutia plans to return next session with another try at making schools safe havens from junk food.



Compiled by CJ Editors

By the numbers

Energy savings

14.1%: Reduction in June peak energy demand, the highest monthly peak reduction in 2001

12.4%: Reduction in June electricity use, highest monthly reduction in 2001

9.4%: Average monthly reduction in peak demand, January through September

7.7%: Reduction in monthly electricity use for September, 2001

8-10%: Electric conservation reduction goal set by Governor Davis

7: Total number of days with rolling blackouts since January, 2001

23: Total number of actual black out hours over those seven days

5,248: Megawatt savings attributed to voluntary conservation on June 21st, biggest day for electric consumption this year.

1,000: Average daily megawatt savings expected from public awareness campaign encouraging voluntary energy conservation

Source: California Energy Commission, Independent System Operator

A woman's

While visiting the California Capitol in October, a place I once covered for my San Diego newspaper, my nine-month-old daughter started those fidgety moves that meant it was time for lunch. I slipped from a press conference in search of a place to nurse her, certain I would have to settle for a noisy public bathroom.

But one floor up, I discovered the “mother’s room”— a couch-and-pillow furnished hideaway where we could have some privacy. As Ellie and I rested there, it struck me that six years ago, I had sat just a few doors away in another room to write about a bill guaranteeing mothers the right to nurse in public.

Women haven’t completely shattered the glass ceiling in politics. But the more women seize the legislative reins, the more family, child care and health issues are pushed to the top of the agenda.

Several assemblymen feared it might endorse public nudity. In a show of defiance, women insulted by the idea packed the hearing room, unbuttoned their shirts, and nursed their babies openly. We may like to think that lawmakers, like blind justice, pursue change and make laws free of personal bias, with the general public in mind. But in fact, they often take on crusades that interest them, while neglecting or opposing those they don’t understand or have experience with. Men may applaud a new stamp to pay for breast-cancer research. They may vote for a law requiring insurers to cover contraception. Occasionally, they may even tackle such issues on their own, such as when Assemblyman Dario Frommer (D-Los Angeles) this year forced employers to give nursing moms time and space to breast feed or pump. But typically, the passion that turns such ideas into reality starts with a woman who grows tired of men — like those lawmakers six years ago — who would sooner use the power of government to penalize women than to help make their lives easier.

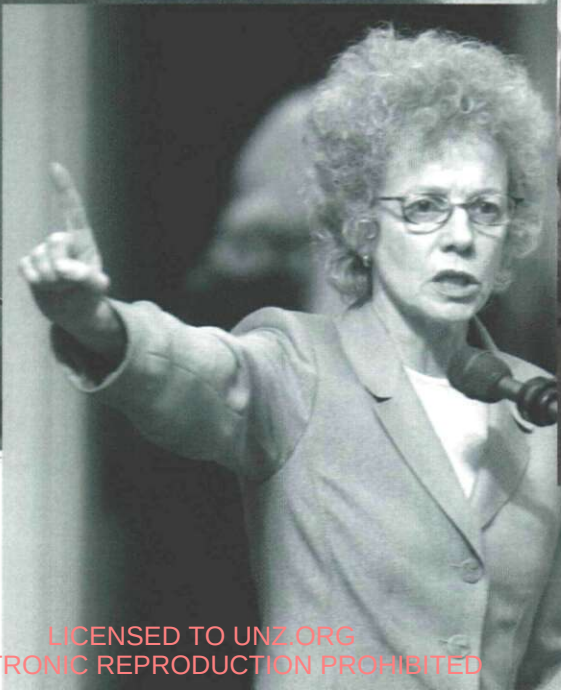
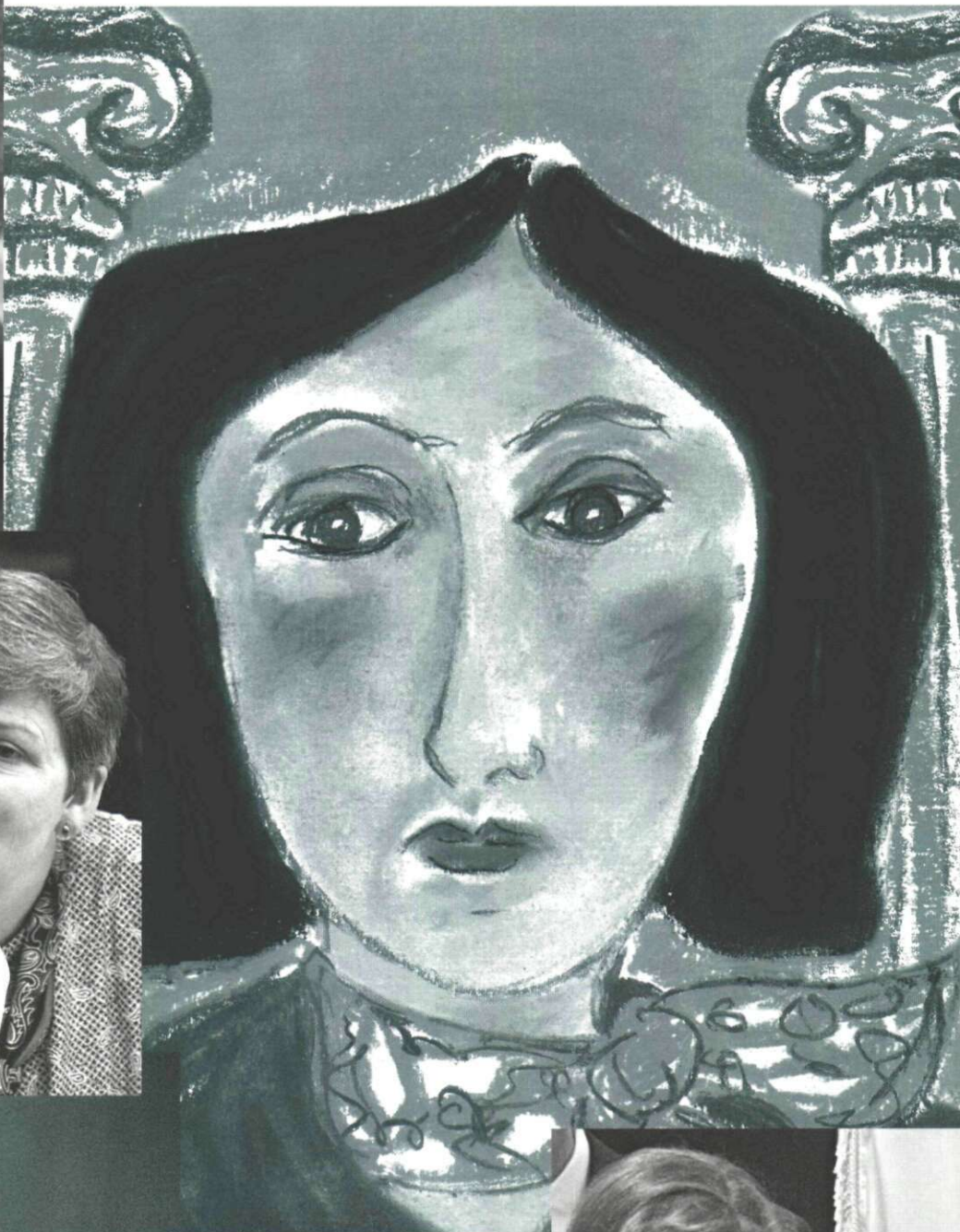
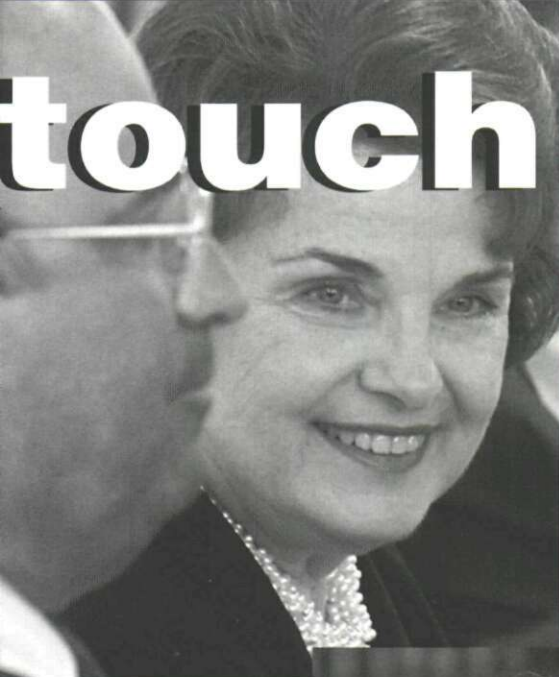
The more women hold elective office, the more government addresses topics important to them. But while we hear often about the increasing numbers of women in statehouses and in the nation’s Capitol, the cold statistics are less sanguine:

- This country is the birthplace of the women’s movement, yet it ranks 49th in the world in its overall representation of women in elected office.
- In the nation’s Capitol, women hold barely 14 percent of seats in the House and just 13 percent of those in the Senate.
- In the California Capitol, a little more than one-in-five lawmakers is a woman.
- Nationally, women hold only about one-fourth of statewide elective offices — positions such as governor or insurance commissioner.

**An Essay by
Dana Wilkie**



touch



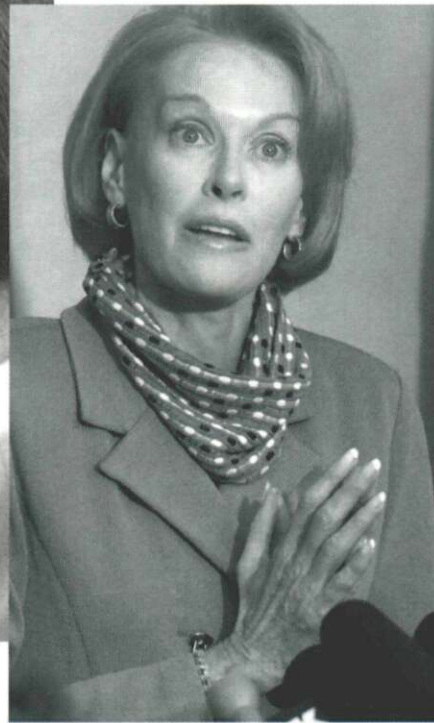
Counter-clockwise from top: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein, Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill, State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastman, First Lady Sharon Davis, Assemblywoman Carole Migden



Kerry Mazzoni, Secretary for Education



Senator Debra Bowen



State Controller Kathleen Connell

How does one explain why women, who have consistently voted in larger numbers than men in every presidential election since 1964, cannot elect a representative number of voices to their legislative bodies?

There are the standard explanations: Women moved into the public-office arena relatively recently and need time to play catch-up. Women more often slow their careers to raise children. Women remain less comfortable than men in the rough-and-tumble world of politics.

And there are the more insidious explanations that have little to do with a woman's family choices or ambition. A principal one is that the institutions that move candidates into public office — leaders who recruit and groom candidates, organizations that raise campaign money, politicians who draw legislative boundaries — are dominated by men, some of whom still have backward views about women as politicians and leaders.

Consider that in the 1998 elections, top winners among assembly male candidates took in nearly four times as much campaign money as did the top fund-raising women. A healthy portion of these dollars came from party leaders who decided which races deserved money.

Consider that the key people who just drew new legislative boundaries were all men. When the maps were finished, women's groups complained they would damage women's opportunities to win seats in the state Legislature (see story, page 32).

Consider the story behind Representative Nancy Pelosi's (D-San Francisco) recent election as the most powerful woman in congressional history: Just before House members cast ballots for their new Democratic whip — the person who rounds up votes on party issues — there were

reports that Pelosi could lose to her male competitor because some of her colleagues wanted a man in leadership during wartime (see story, page 16).

One expects that the Democratic Party, long perceived as more inclusive of women and minorities than the GOP, would have had a woman in its leadership circles long ago. But in addition to the House, U.S. Senate Democrats have never had a woman in leadership, and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee only this year acquired a woman as its leader. As for the Republican Party, one hopes they might have learned something after losing so many elections to the gender gap. This year, 60 percent of women serving in statehouses are Democrats; only 39 percent are Republicans. All the women in the California Senate are Democrats, and of the Assembly's 24 women, only four are Republican.

Six years ago, then-Assemblywoman Jackie Speier (D-Hillsborough) could not find one Republican vote on the Assembly Appropriations Committee for her bill requiring insurers to include in their benefits FDA-approved contraceptives. Only after years of battling insurers and male-dominated committees did the Bay-area Democrat watch her bill become law. It took comparable perseverance for Speier to outlaw the higher prices that businesses charge to dry clean women's clothing and to cut their hair.

The national Republican Party this year launched another of its campaigns to lure more women to its ranks. Party leaders would be wise to take direction from the moderates among them, who complain about a GOP "power" agenda that lacks compassion, a family-values agenda seemingly designed to keep women from financial independence and an anti-abortion agenda that would force into poverty women ill-prepared to raise children. For every Republican who defeats a child-care law more friendly

to a parent's work hours and wallets, there is a voting woman robbed of the energy to build her career because of the "second shift" she pulls at home. For every Republican-backed busi-



Assemblywoman Charlene Zettel

ness group that won't endorse flexible schedules or job-sharing, there are voting women deprived of the peace of mind that would make them more productive at work.

The president of the National Women's Political Caucus, Roselyn O'Connell, is convinced that women



Senator Jackie Speier

reporters stack the cards against a woman's candidacy.

In their zeal to dismiss then-state Treasurer Kathleen Brown as too much of a lightweight to be California governor, Republicans in 1993 began referring to her as "Kathy." They commonly remarked that she was pretty and charming, as many women are introduced before getting to the pertinent topic of their capabilities. One of her primary-election competitors, Democratic Insurance Commissioner John Garamendi, referred to her ideas as "cotton-candy solutions" — imparting the image of some wide-eyed thing in pink taffeta.

In the 1992 presidential election, the GOP scoffed at Hillary Rodham Clinton's nontraditional notions of a woman's place, then began disrespectful reference to her by first name only. Attempts to diminish Bill Clinton were based on his lack of D.C. experience, his youth, his alleged draft dodging and his record governing the state of Arkansas. Voters did not miss the message: Though Bill Clinton would be judged on his merits, Hillary Clinton would be judged on her gender.

Reporters still refer to women candidates as "bubbly," "perky" or "chipper." When was the last time a reporter described a male candidate as "perky?" Men are "energetic," a word that connotes power. Women are "perky," a word that trivializes.

Even the term "women's issues" is diminishing — as if these topics were either a sideline to the larger concerns of taxes and budget deficits, or as if women did not care about taxes and budget deficits. If an editor decides that affordable child care is one of the chief concerns of women voters today, she may generate interest for a daily story, perhaps for a magazine's monthly issue, maybe for an election



Senator Sheila Kuehl

often hit a "glass ceiling" in politics for the same reasons they do in business: because men in power are more comfortable mentoring other men; because women still are perceived as less able to operate on the deal-making "inside" of an institution; because many people still trust a male model of "strength" that values confrontation over collaboration.

"Women risk a perception problem when they do exhibit the same sort of strength and determination that men do," O'Connell says. "They're not perceived to be strong and decisive. It's perceived as something else, and let's just say it's not flattering."

Even the language used to describe women politicians remains reductive.

Women who talk too much about gender inequities are still called "angry women" or "strident," language designed to diminish their complaints. Rare is the politician who speaks these words openly, but be assured that privately among one another, men use the labels freely.

During the 2000 presidential campaign, those opposed to Elizabeth Dole's candidacy for the GOP nomination remarked that she could not articulate a reason why she wanted to be president, though it seemed she had articulated as many reasons as had George W. Bush — the only difference being that his reasons got more press. Saying that a woman cannot articulate why she wants a job, a complaint that leaves the impression she is indecisive or can't think straight, is just one way competitors and



Maria Contreras-Sweet, Secretary of Business, Transportation and Housing



Left to right: Loretta Lynch, chair of the Public Utilities Commission; Senator Deborah Ortiz; Senator Martha Escutia



cycle — the way “soccer moms” and “year of the woman” became a way to compartmentalize “women’s issues” into a place and a season, without incorporating them into the daily dialogue of politics.

That this month’s issue of the *California Journal* is devoted to women — that I am writing an essay on women in politics at all — is testament that the entire concept of “women in politics” remains a curiosity. How often do we devote magazine issues to men in politics? We don’t. How often do we refer to “men’s issues?” Men in politics is a given. It is not “news.” It is not novel. It is understood that what men care about, what they agitate for, is so woven

into the fabric of daily politicking that it is unremarkable.

Perceptions about women as politicians and leaders are so deeply carved into personality and behavior that they are not easily remolded. They can be reshaped by parents, peers, teachers, television, experience, and by placing in this country’s capitols more and more women who have lived and understand the worries and frustrations of other women. 🏠

Contributing editor Dana Wilkie is a Washington, D.C., correspondent for Copley News Service. Comments on this article may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

California’s power elite

Many women exert influence over the course of public affairs in California. What follows is a sampling of the state’s elected power elite. Not included are the likes of Janice Rogers Brown, Joyce Kennard and Kathryn Werdegar — three members of the State Supreme Court; Monica Lozano, publisher and editor of La Opinion newspaper in Los Angeles; and Nancy Reagan. In choosing these nine, we made no attempt to be politically correct, nor to achieve any semblance of balance between the two major political parties. In fact, every woman on this list is a Democrat — a reflection on both the state of the Republican Party in California and the ability of women to gain stature and influence within its ranks. Here, then, are the power elite (in alphabetical order):

Barbara Boxer

U.S. Senator

Elected: 1992

Age: 61

Home: Greenbrae

Elective career: Marin County Board of Supervisors, 1977-1982; U.S. House, 1982-1992



Both a savvy insider and a committed liberal, Boxer twice has beaten back targeted statewide challenges from the Republican Party. She is a close ally of state Senate President pro Tempore John Burton and newly elected House Minority Whip Nancy Pelosi.

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke

L.A. County Supervisor, District 2

Elected: 1992

Age: 69

Home: Los Angeles

Elective career: Assembly, 1966-1972; U.S. House, 1972-1978; Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 1979.



Burke is a fixture in Los Angeles politics, having been in elective office continually for 35 years, the past 22 as one of only five county supervisors. Among her former staff members now in politics is Assemblyman Herb Wesson, who will become assembly speaker in February.

Dianne Feinstein

U.S. Senator

Elected: 1992

Age: 68

Home: San Francisco

Elective career: San Francisco Board of Supervisors, 1969-1978; San Francisco mayor, 1973-1988



Arguably the most powerful woman in California, Feinstein has strung together an impressive list of electoral victories since narrowly losing the 1990 governor's race to Republican Pete Wilson.

Janice Hahn

L.A. City Councilmember

District 15

Elected: 2001

Age: 49

Home: San Pedro

Elective career: Los Angeles Charter Commission, 15th District, 1997



Part of one of Southern California's most distinguished political families, Hahn has key positions on two critical Council committees: Education and Neighborhoods (chair) and Commerce, Energy and Natural Resources (vice chair). It doesn't hurt that she is the sister of newly minted L.A. Mayor Jaime Hahn.

Jane Harman

U.S. Representative, District 36

Elected: 2000

Age: 56

Home: Marina del Rey

Elective career: U.S. House, 1992-1998, 2000. (Her congressional career was interrupted in 1998 when she ran unsuccessfully for governor, losing the Democratic primary.)



Harman is regarded as an inside player in Washington and has moved center stage as the ranking Democrat on the House Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security.

Gloria Molina

L.A. County Supervisor, District 1

Elected: 1991

Age: 53

Home: Los Angeles

Elective career: Assembly, 1982-1987; L.A. City Council, 1987-1991;



Molina has survived the often rough-and-tumble world of L.A. Latino politics to become

the first Latina elected to the Board of Supervisors and thus a power in Southern California. As one of only five supervisors elected to govern a county of nearly 10 million people, she and her colleagues have constituencies larger than most states.

Carole Migden

Assemblymember, District 13

Elected: 1996

Age: 53

Home: San Francisco

Elective career: San Francisco Board of Supervisors, 1990-1996



Migden arrived in Sacramento early in 1996 after winning a special election to replace no less than Willie Brown Jr., who had been elected mayor of San Francisco. Migden is a prodigious fund raiser who has gained clout and position by sharing her wealth with fellow Democrats. For the past five years, she has wielded more direct power as chair of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Nancy Pelosi

U.S. Representative, District 8

Elected: 1988

Age: 61

Home: San Francisco

Elective career: Her congressional victory in 1988 was her first foray into elective politics.



Pelosi took another long stride in her rise to power earlier this fall when she defeated a male rival for the post of minority whip. That makes the San Franciscan the second-ranking member of the House Democratic Caucus — the highest congressional office ever held by a woman (see story, page 16).

Maxine Waters

U.S. Representative, District 35

Elected: 1990

Age: 63

Home: Los Angeles

Elective career: Assembly, 1977-1990

Maxine Waters has been a power both in Los Angeles and Washington. A close ally of then-Speaker Willie Brown Jr., Waters was an influential legislator before arriving in the national capital a decade ago. Her endorsement in local and legislative races is considered golden in Los Angeles. 🏠



Have women come a

California is the first state to be represented by two women in the U.S. Senate, but women make up just one-quarter of the California Senate. The number of women serving under the statehouse dome has doubled in the last 15 years, but at 28 percent it's still far less than the female share of the population as a whole. And despite its progressive reputation, California ranks behind 12 other states in statehouse representation by females.

13th

California ranks 13th highest among the 50 states for the number of women in the state legislature

Different genders – different issues

Women's role as caregivers in the home translates into higher interest in health and family issues at the ballot box. Men are more likely to favor business and tax issues.

	Women voters	Male voters
Education	33%	29%
Health care	30	23
The economy	25	32
Social Security	24	22
Moral issues	17	15
Gun control	16	14
Taxes	16	21
Abortion	12	6
Foreign policy	10	16

32.1

Percentage of women policy leaders

50.2

Percentage of women in population

0.64

Ratio of women policy leaders to their share of the population

21

California ranking in the years 1997, 1999 and 2001 based on ratio of women policy leaders to their share of the population

45

30

Partners in policy

Californians have yet to elect a female governor, but the number of women in leadership roles as state agency directors, department heads and commission members appointed by governors has grown. Still the number of women in policy leadership positions in 2001 lags behind women's share of the population, and California ranks far below the top states with women in high-ranking policy positions.

Long way?

Women currently hold only 14% of the seats in the 107th U.S. Congress

Only five women under age 40 currently serve in Congress, versus 27 men under 40

Only 22% of legislators in all 50 states are female

The U.S. ranks 49th in the world for representation of women in elected office

Only 26 of 500 presidential cabinet appointees in the last 200 years have been women

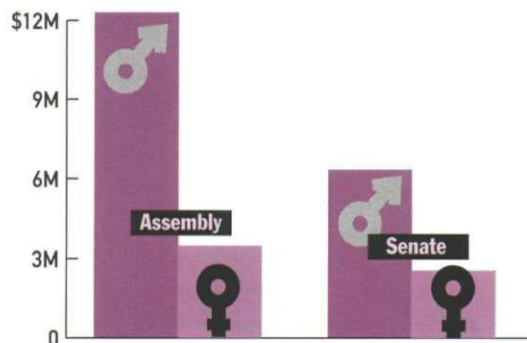
Of the 12,000 citizens serving in Congress over the last 200 years, only 215 have been women

92% of Americans say they would vote for a woman president, but 42% think a man would make a better president

Graphics by Scarlet Shin

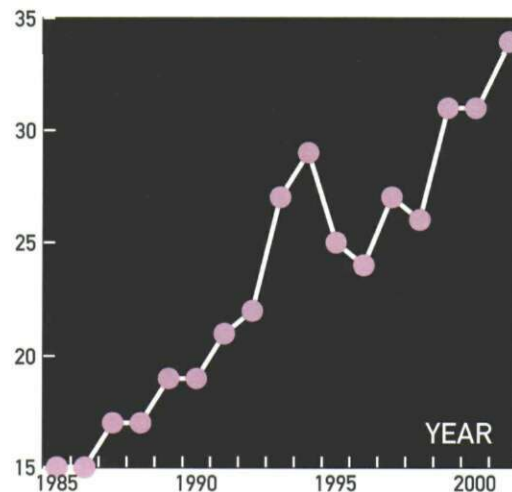
Show me the money

Women still trail men in fund raising. In the 1998 general election, the top five winning male Assembly candidates out-raised the top five women by four times: In the Senate, the difference was twice as much.



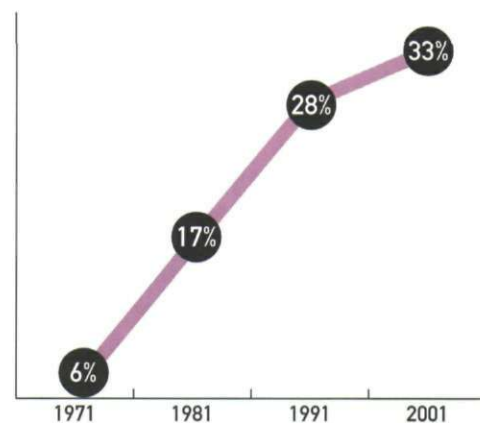
Showing up at the statehouse

Females in the statehouse doubled over the last 15 years but still represent just 28% of the Legislature. All but four of the 34 female legislators are Democrats.



Female persuaders

In 30 years, the number of women lobbyists in Sacramento jumped to one-third the total.



Sources: Center for American Women and Politics; California Secretary of State; Wall Street Journal/NBC News Poll, 2000; Center for Women in Government and Civil Society; The White House Project; Women Under Forty Political Action Committee; State Net.

Nancy Pelosi:

Charting new roads for women in Congress

Nancy Pelosi has a theory about why women rarely ascend to the heights of power on Capitol Hill. As their male counterparts reach political maturity in their 30s and 40s, many women are still raising families and unwilling to live the one-dimensional and often solitary life of a member. By the time women have served in Congress long enough to

In the 218-year history of the United States Congress, no woman has ever chaired a powerful committee or won a major leadership position. Until now. And the first woman to accomplish that feat is an outspoken, unabashed liberal from San Francisco with deep roots in the Democratic Party. She also is about to become one of the most visible faces on Capitol Hill.

By Marc
Sandalow

have gained the seniority that brings advancement, they are a good 10 years older than their male counterparts — and a decade closer to the end of their careers.

It helps explain why in the 218-year history of Congress, a woman has never before chaired a powerful committee or won a major leadership position.

Until Pelosi.

In January, the 61-year-old San Francisco Democrat, serving her eighth term, assumes the post of minority whip, the party's number-two position in the House. She will instantly become one of the most recognizable faces on Capitol Hill and has a clear shot of someday becoming speaker. After 14 years in





Outgoing House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Michigan) presents his successor, Nancy Pelosi, with a whip, Washington D.C., October 10, 2001. Pelosi defeated U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer (D-Maryland) to become the first female whip. (AP Photo/Joe Marquette)

elected office, Pelosi will become the highest ranking woman to ever serve in Congress.

"We made history," Pelosi said moments after defeating Maryland Representative Steny Hoyer in a bare-knuckled competition for the post. "Now we need to make progress."

How the mother of five broke the mold to do what no woman had done before her is a study in hard work, good timing and luck. And it holds valuable insights into what the nation can expect from the former Pacific Heights political organizer who is now perched on the upper echelons of power.

A most visible Californian

By the time Pelosi was 47, the youngest of her five children was nearly finished with high school. Several of her kids were attending college in Washington. Pelosi ran for Congress and quickly became one of the hardest working freshman.

Women believe Pelosi's presence will forever change the face of Washington power. Democrats say Pelosi will help them win back the House. Republicans contend Pelosi is an unrepentant liberal. They are probably all right.

"My top priorities are children, children, children," Pelosi says in her fast-paced, breathless, staccato that she slows, if ever so slightly, when she is conducting a television interview. "Their education, their health, the environment in which they live, the economic security of their family, affordable housing, transportation, those kind of issues."

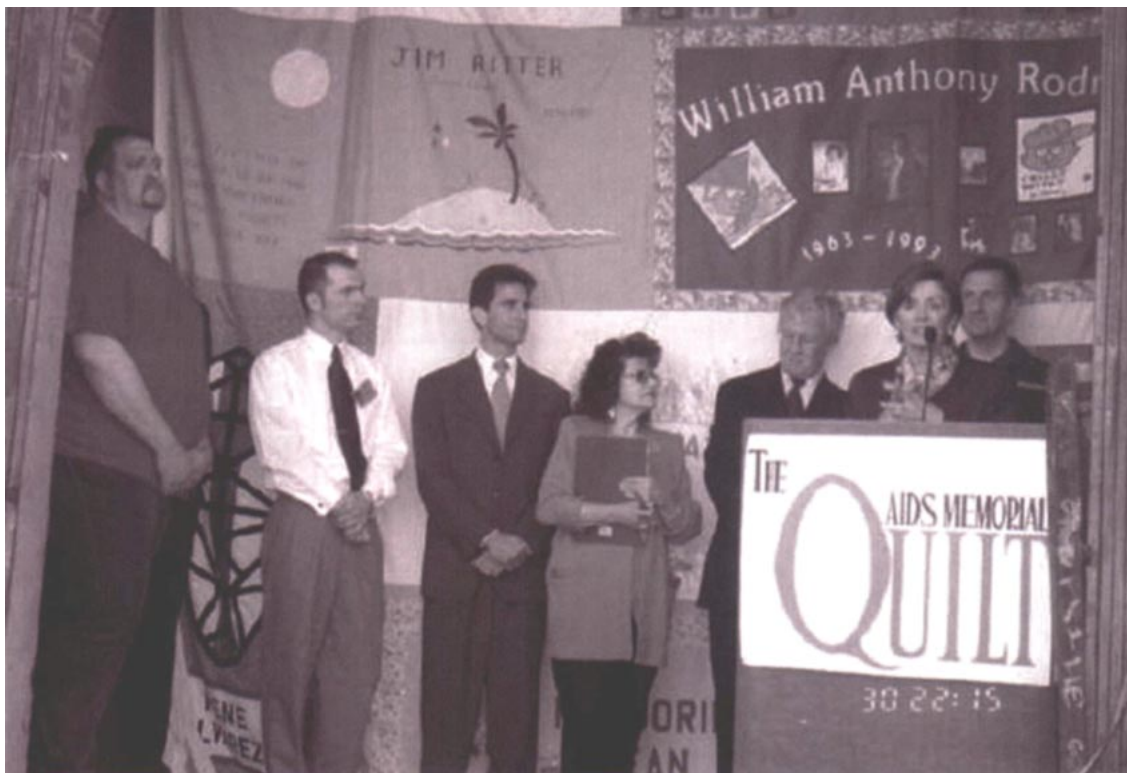
Poised to become the most visible Californian in the House, Pelosi is a curious mix of liberal idealism ("Our success as a party does not come from a lukewarm place in the middle," she said) and shrewd political pragmatist

("I don't consider myself a moderate. But I certainly reach out to them. We have to have the votes").

Stung like most of her Democratic colleagues by the GOP's takeover of the House in 1994, Pelosi has made it plain that, while her own politics are

election and sees winning back the House in 2002 as one of her prime responsibilities.

But Pelosi is not content merely being the highest ranking woman in Congress. Many House members spend their entire career trying to reach the



Speaking at the Quilt Project for AIDS victims.

to the left, she believes moderation in pursuit of victory is no vice. She openly railed against some of Bill Clinton's centrist political positions — his support for free trade with China, his embrace of welfare reform, among others — yet stood behind him when he was down, and said, "He probably did more for the country than President [John F.] Kennedy ever did." Pelosi is routinely elected with more than 80 percent of the vote in one of the nation's most progressive districts, yet she uses the old-fashioned leverage of campaign dollars to climb the political ladder.

If she is to succeed in steering the Congress back toward the liberal issues that are her passion, she knows Democrats must first win elections. Pelosi takes great pride in the Democratic Party's victories in all four of California's swing districts in the 2000

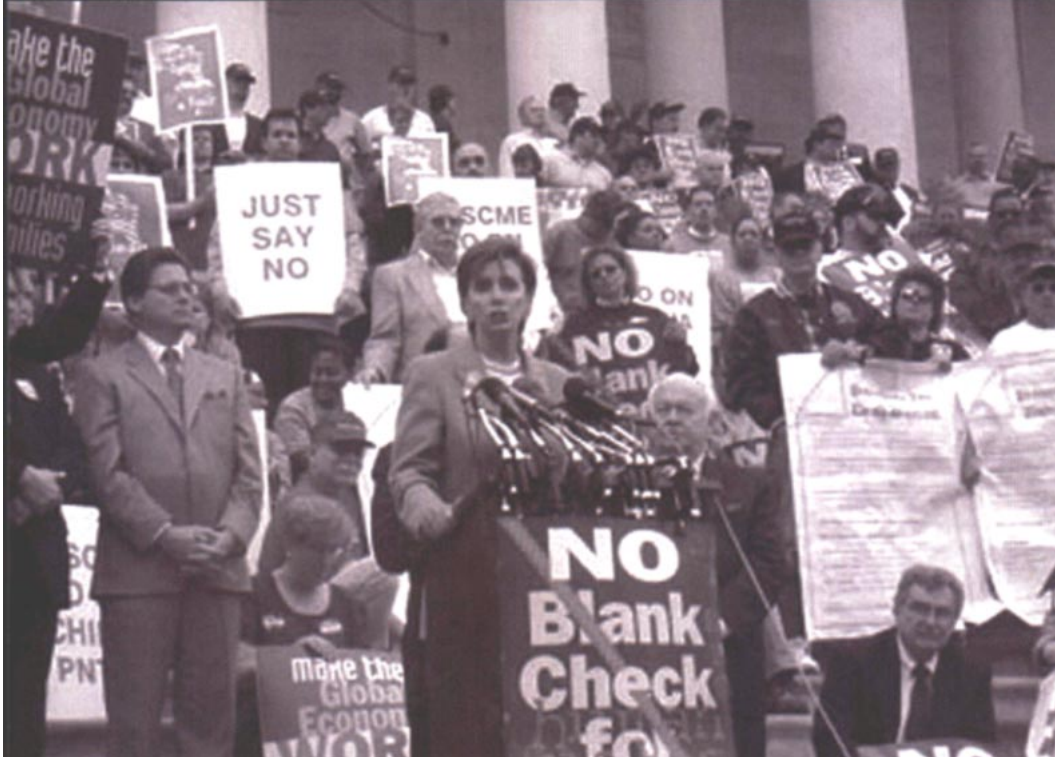
very precipice of power where she now stands, and Pelosi is not about to squander it.

Budding career

Pelosi's political career began nearly a generation ago when Dianne Feinstein was a mayor and Barry Bonds was a young outfielder for the Pittsburgh Pirates. San Francisco Representative Sala Burton — who along with her husband, Phil, had occupied the city's congressional seat for more than a quarter century — lay on her deathbed and endorsed Pelosi to succeed her.

Pelosi was born into politics — her father served as a member of the House and then mayor of Baltimore, a post later occupied by her brother.

She had made a name for herself in California Democratic circles, helping Jerry Brown's 1976 run for presi-



Pelosi in 2000 protesting at a rally against U.S. trade policy with China.

dent and taking the helm of the state Democratic Party.

"I had no idea she might even be interested in running for elected office, nor did she ever express an interest," said former Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy (D-San Francisco), who got to know Pelosi when she was raising five children and helping party causes during the 1970s. Her experience as a fund raiser and party activist proved valuable, and by the time Pelosi arrived in Congress, after squeaking by Supervisor Harry Britt in a raucous primary, she claimed to already know more than 200 members.

In Washington, her top priority was to make the federal government pay attention to the AIDS crisis that was ravaging her district, and she became the first member of Congress to add a full-time AIDS specialist to her staff. She landed a coveted position on the House Appropriations Committee — where all spending bills originate — and devoted much of her energy to assignments on the thankless ethics panel and the Intelligence Committee, where she is now the ranking Democratic member.

Pelosi's legislative career took an unexpected turn on June 4, 1989, when the Chinese government slaughtered scores of democracy demonstrators in

Tiananmen Square. Pelosi's bid to permit visiting Chinese students to remain in the United States amid the turmoil evolved into a lasting human-rights crusade. Her annual fight to revoke China's trade status would raise her national profile and pit her against Washington's monied interests and many of her fellow Democrats. (Presi-

dent Clinton once referred to her as an unprintable expletive during a tirade over her opposition to his China policy.)

Still, Pelosi showed no interest in leadership posts, saying in an interview five years ago that she'd "rather have a vote from my colleagues on an issue. ...I like to spend my time legislating."

Change of fortune

But fortunes change unexpectedly in the House. When Pelosi arrived, Representative Tony Coelho (D-Merced) was the number-three Democrat and later Representative Vic Fazio (D-West Sacramento) seemed to be the state's choice in the leadership stakes. Coelho left amid questions concerning his finances. Fazio left for fam-

ily reasons. Other longtime powers in the delegation — such as George Miller of Martinez and Henry Waxman of Santa Monica — clung to their powerful committee posts rather than run for leadership positions.

So Pelosi drove full throttle into the void.

"Why should California always

The California Cable Television Association
is now the



California Cable &
Telecommunications
Association

...because things change.

www.calcable.org

be represented at the seat of power by others," Pelosi said before her election. "We are the source of so many fresh ideas and resources — both human

with panoramic views of the Kennedy Center and the Potomac River, a perfect spot for Washington power entertaining.

"Our success as a party does not come from a lukewarm place in the middle"
— Nancy Pelosi

and intellectual. Why shouldn't we be there ourselves."

California provides a natural base of power in the House, with 32 Democrats, by far the nation's largest delegation. Pelosi has built on the base with a formidable fund-raising operation in which she channeled millions of dollars from wealthy Bay Area Democrats into the campaign coffers of candidates across the country.

Over the past three years, Pelosi's office estimates she raised \$5.6 million for the party, making her the House Democrats' top fund-raiser after Minority Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri and Representatives Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island and Charlie Rangel of New York.

Pelosi combines professional graciousness and a fierce partisanship.

She traded in her Pennsylvania Avenue apartment this past year for an opulent Georgetown penthouse

When it comes to elections, Pelosi plays to win.

After hearing that Bush had won last November's election, Pelosi said: "It was like I had been hit in the head by a sledgehammer and kicked in the stomach by a mule."

Pelosi's style is certainly much softer than her Republican counterpart, Majority Whip Tom Delay of Texas who is affectionately known as The Hammer. Yet like Delay, Pelosi is known for not holding back.

"No question that Nancy speaks her mind," said Representative David Obey (D-Wisconsin), who has served in the House since 1969. "I've seen a lot of people, as they approach leadership [positions] round out corners" to make themselves more widely acceptable. "Nancy doesn't do that," Obey said with great admiration. "She defines issues with sharp edges. She is going to shake this place up."



Pelosi in her Washington, D.C. office with a constituent

Washington is presently distracted with matters of terror and war, but partisan divisions are already showing as the House takes up airline security and the economy.

"The whip is a tough job," said outgoing Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Michigan), who is stepping down to run for governor. "Sometimes the whip has to crack the whip; sometimes the whip becomes a lasso corralling people, bringing them together. Nancy Pelosi can do both."

Were Democrats to win control of the House in 2002, Gephardt would almost certainly become speaker and Pelosi would be the front runner for the position of majority leader. If Gephardt steps down or decides to run for president — which many Democrats believe is likely — Pelosi would be in line to become speaker. That would culminate a remarkable journey for a woman who just 14 years ago was ridiculed by her male opponents for her campaign slogan: "A voice that will be heard."

"For a long time, a woman in this arena has had to kind of say, 'Listen to me, hear me,'" Pelosi said, reflecting on her career. "Now I'll be in a place, where ... just by virtue of the office, just by dint of what I'm doing and the position I hold, people will listen." 🏠

Contributing Editor Marc Sandalow is Washington bureau chief for the San Francisco Chronicle. Comments on this article may be sent to edit@statenet.com.



Age: 61

Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland

Family: Husband, Paul, and five children

Education: Trinity College, BA 1962

Experience:

Chosen Democratic Whip At Large, 2001

U.S. House of Representatives, 1987-present

Committees include Appropriations & Intelligence

Democratic National Platform Committee, 1992

Democratic Senate campaign committee chair, 1985

California Democratic Party chair, 1981-83

Northern California Democratic chair, 1977-81

At Risk



Half of these women will likely have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetimes. Osteoporosis is an extremely debilitating disease affecting 28 million Americans, 80 percent of them women. Yet the impact of this disease can be minimized and even prevented.

Research reveals that 85 percent of bone mass is determined by age 16, signaling that childhood and adolescent exercise and calcium intake are essential elements of osteoporosis prevention. After age 16, proper nutrition remains a critical factor in maintaining good bone health. With as much as 33 percent more calcium than milk sold in other states, California milk assists our children, teens and adults in maximizing their calcium intake.

Regular bone-density testing and education is

the key to early diagnosis and treatment of osteoporosis. Information about the disease, new treatment alternatives, community testing programs and how you can make a difference in this important fight, is available from the Foundation for Osteoporosis Research and Education (FORE).

**For more information, contact FORE
(888) 266-3015**



www.californiamilk.com



Foundation for Osteoporosis
Research and Education

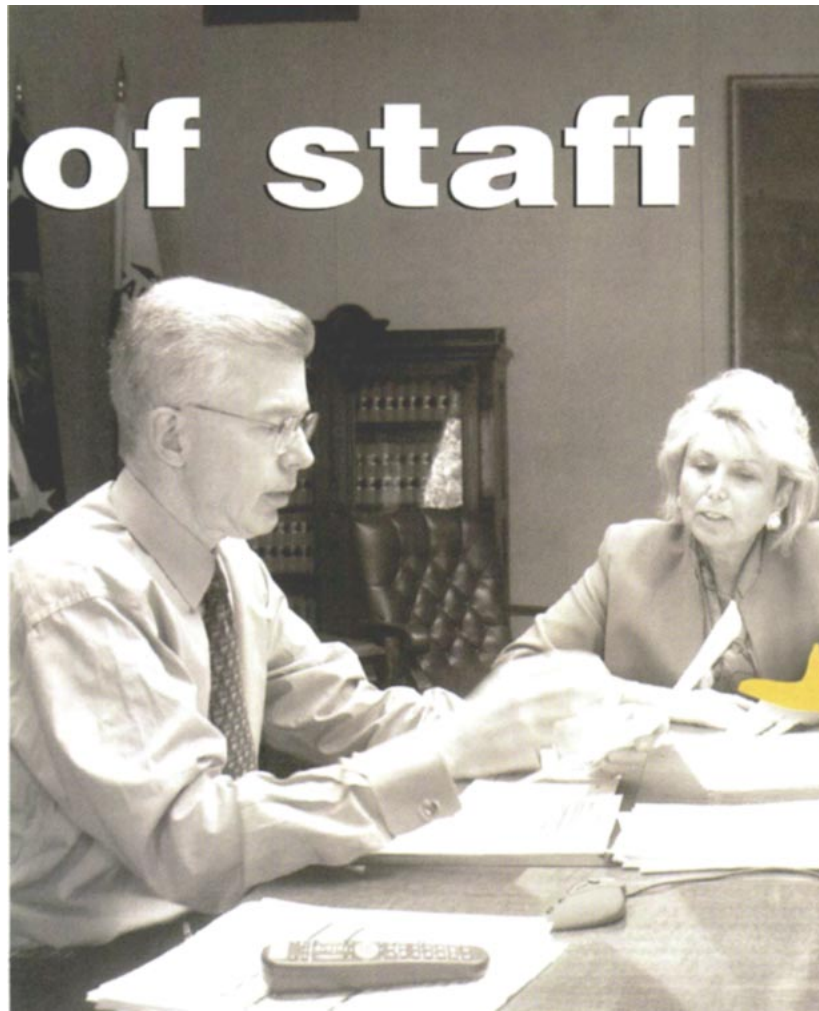
www.fore.org

Chiefs of staff

A triumvirate of women back up the three most powerful men in Sacramento.

Lynn Schenk, Alison Harvey and Diane Griffiths all bring long experience and wield power in their

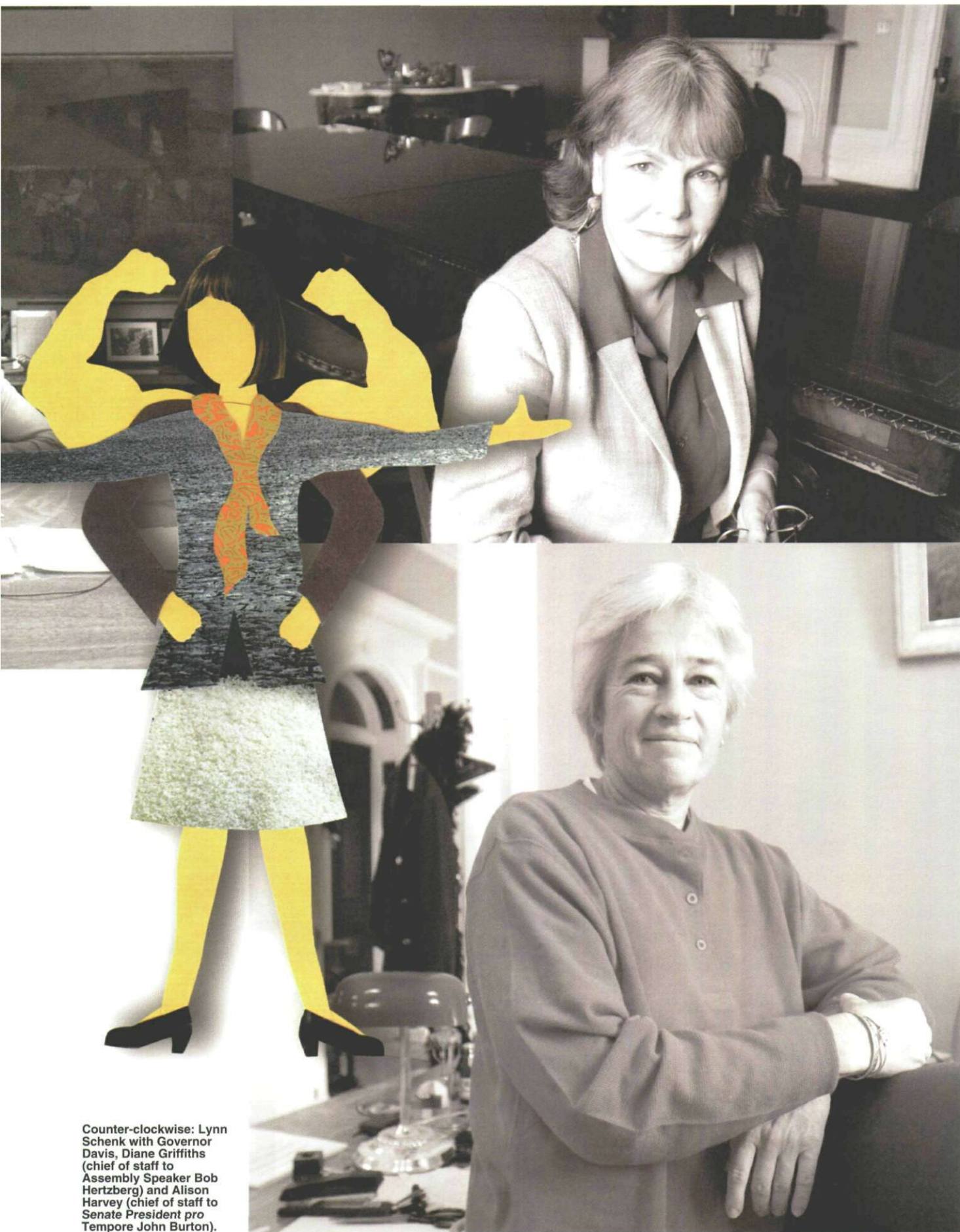
own right as chiefs of staff to the governor, Senate President pro Tempore and Assembly Speaker.



By Lynda
Gledhill

They are the women behind the men — three chiefs of staff who are rarely heard from publicly but nonetheless wield in credible force inside the state Capitol. Lynn Schenk, Alison Harvey and Diane Griffiths form a triangle of power behind the state's top leaders. That Governor Gray Davis, Senate President pro Tempore John Burton and Assembly Speaker Robert Hertzberg saw fit to appoint these women as their "right-hand men" says something about our times and our leaders, political observers say.

Schenk, Harvey and Griffiths may hold the same title, but their roles and personalities are as different as the men who appointed them. What they hold in common is the unique inner drive to shape public policy.



Counter-clockwise: Lynn Schenk with Governor Davis, Diane Griffiths (chief of staff to Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg) and Alison Harvey (chief of staff to Senate President pro Tempore John Burton).

"What women bring—and these three in particular—is a less macho, less high school locker room sensibility to public policy," said Phil Isenberg, former lawmaker and current lobbyist.

Of the three, Schenk is the one truly breaking new ground. She is the first woman chief of staff to a California governor. She has been on the forefront more than once—whether it was breaking the gender barrier at an all-male San Diego restaurant or being the first female attorney at San Diego Gas and Electric Company.

"She is the ultimate glass ceiling breaker," said long-time friend Laurie Black.

Black, who was Schenk's chief of staff during her one term in Congress, said Schenk is aware of her role as a pioneering woman, but does not dwell on it. "I get angry at her for it," Black admits. "She gets so caught up in being chief of staff for the governor, she forgets how significant her achievements are."

But Schenk has always been a strong supporter for women's issues, said Terri Thomas, another long-time friend and current Sacramento lobbyist. "She is not a Janie-come-lately," Thomas said. "Lynn couldn't be stronger on women's issues, especially on things such as choice, equal opportunity and pay equity."

Schenk is the only one of these three chiefs of staff to run for office, winning a seat in Congress in 1992, before losing it to Republican Brian Bilbray two years later. In 1998, she tried to become the state's first woman attorney general but lost to then-Senator Bill Lockyer in the Democratic primary. Schenk returned to the private sector, working as a lawyer in San

Diego. She and Davis are old friends, having worked together in former-Governor Jerry Brown's administration, when Schenk was the first woman secretary of the old Business and Transportation Agency. Her personal relationship with Davis is rare and invaluable. She is among his most trusted advisors—the first person he talks to about work in the morning and the last person at night. She was the one who told the governor about the September 11th attacks. Those who work with Schenk say she is tough, but fair, and above all, a hard worker.

"It's 24-7 with her," Black said.

Garry South, Davis' political adviser, said she is the hardest working person he has met in politics.

"She is in the office at 6:30 or 7 in the morning and often leaves at midnight or even later. It is not easy for her since she lives in San Diego, so she is basically living out of a suitcase in Sacramento," South said.

Friends say Schenk's all-work style masks a person who is deeply committed to her husband and life in San Diego. "She has a deep faith and devotion to her community," Thomas said.

For now, Schenk spends most of her hours toiling for Davis, managing every problem that comes along. "I talked to her once during the energy crisis and jokingly talked about her having the economy of the world on her shoulders, but she said she felt it," Black said.

Legislative chiefs

Perhaps Harvey and Griffiths don't feel the weight of the world, but they have their own challenges.

For Griffiths, it's juggling the needs of not only Assembly Speaker Hertzberg (D-Sherman Oaks) but also 79 other Assembly members and staff as they vie to pass bills, garner committee assignments and chairmanships, hire staff, secure a bigger office, *ad infinitum*. For close to 20 years, Griffiths has worked in the Assembly, using her skills as a lawyer to maneuver her way through public policy debates.

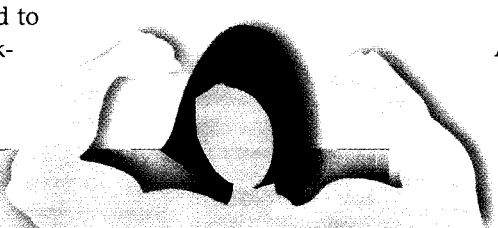
A "troubleshooter" is her one-word description of her job.

"I get up in the morning, I come to work and I do what needs to be done. That could be anything from photocopying to talking to the vice president," she said matter-of-factly.

Griffiths is also the "eyes and ears of the speaker," and, Hertzberg said, someone who knows the way the building works better than most. "She is a manager who understands the political process. She is able to deal with the personality of hundreds of people. She interfaces more than any other staffer with members, and it takes a tremendous amount of skill to interface with members," he said.

Griffiths said she has to see the big picture while also keeping track of all the issues swirling around lawmakers.

"I know the basics of every policy issue in the house," she said. "I know member issues. I know the districts. I have to understand how what is going on in one room might affect what is going on in another room."



Capitol Clout

Lynn Schenk, Alison Harvey and Diane Griffiths are not the only women who wield influence in the Capitol in Sacramento. A sampling of the others include Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill; Susan Kennedy, governor's deputy chief of staff for cabinet affairs; Karen French, staff director, Senate Appropriations Committee; Elizabeth Kersten, director, Senate Office of Research; Eileen Roush, chief consultant, Assembly Revenue and Taxation Committee; Lynn Montgomery, director, Assembly Office of Democratic Services; Elaine Howle, state auditor.

Hertzberg said Griffiths' tireless work leaves him in awe. She sends him a memo at home every Sunday night with a summary of all the issues being worked on. The memo on the recent week — during one of the slower times in the legislative year — contained 53 items.

that she intends to honor.

"I promised my daughter that things will be better for her," she said.

As a single mother of a 13-year-old-girl, Griffiths said it is always a struggle to balance work and home life. "I had

**"What women bring — and these three in particular — is a less macho, less high school locker room sensibility to public policy."
— Phil Isenberg**

"She is very responsible," Hertzberg said. "And a perfectionist."

Air traffic control

Those traits are ones that are repeated with all three women. Harvey had a similar description for her job: "air traffic controller."

"I'm more like the glue that holds it all together," she said.

She and Griffiths agree that the differences in their jobs comes from working for such different people. "John hates memos," Harvey said of her boss, Senator John Burton (D-San Francisco). That suits her just fine. She says she gets along with Burton, despite his infamous temper. "You have to learn that it isn't personal," she said.

She decided to get involved in politics after six years as a reporter. In a move that makes them all laugh today, Harvey actually answered a newspaper ad for a campaign consultant, and soon landed a job running Phil Isenberg's first campaign for the Assembly in 1982. Eventually, she became his chief of staff, gaining expertise in a wide variety of subjects. She was the key staffer during the first year the tobacco tax was allocated; it was her job to referee the many competing interests.

Isenberg also put her in charge of helping him oversee the state Gambling Commission — a job he says she earned by repairing slot machines before she went into politics.

"She is remarkably smart," Isenberg said. "She has great judgment."

The free-spirit attitude that led Harvey to repair slot machines for a summer continues today.

"I never plan my life very carefully," she said. Which means she doesn't know where she'll go when Burton is termed out in 2004.

Griffiths has even less time to decide. Hertzberg will be handing off his speakership in the spring. But before she thinks about her next job, she has another commitment

a long talk with Bob about what it would mean. There were certain sacrifices I wouldn't make," she said.

But it is never easy. Still, as a manager, Griffiths tries to make sure staff also have flexibility. "You never miss a Back to School night," she said.

No gender issues

None of these women see their gender as an issue, and neither do any of the men who hired them.

"[Griffiths'] competence is so extraordinary that I never gave it any thought," said former Assemblyman Burt Margolin (D-Los Angeles), who hired Griffiths to be his chief of staff in the 1980s.

But as smart women, they do make a few adjustments to counter their male-dominated world. Harvey said she likes to wear a red suit on days when she knows she will face a room full of men in gray suits. Griffiths has learned to be more forceful than her normal soft-spoken tone.

There is no doubt that life for women inside the Capitol has improved significantly over the past 30 years.

Elizabeth Kersten, now director of the Senate Office of Research, estimates that there were just three women professionals when she started at the Capitol in 1971. When Kersten was a consultant to the budget committee in 1974, the sergeant would always replace the overstuffed leather member chairs with a small secretary chair for her to sit in.

"I'd just quietly move the big chair back," she laughed.

Senator Jackie Speier (D-Hillsborough), once a congressional chief of staff, knows that Schenk, Harvey and Griffiths mean more to the Capitol than they ever receive proper public credit for. "They are the unsung heroes of the building," she said. 🏛️

Lynda Gledhill is a political reporter in the Sacramento bureau of the San Francisco Chronicle. Comments on this story may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

Hilda Solis:

Profile in courage

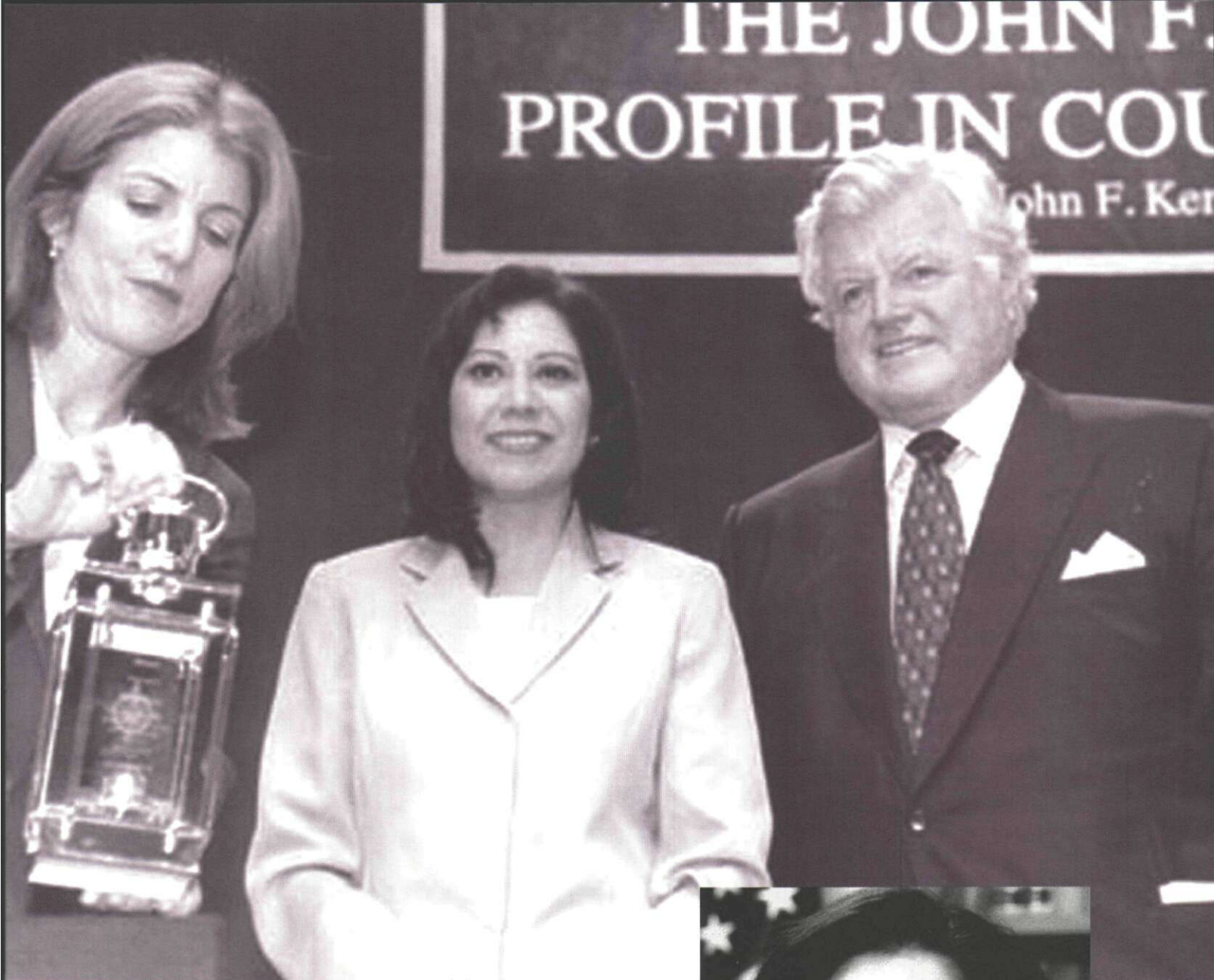
Hilda Solis is an unabashed liberal and an unwavering advocate for labor, the environment and the underdog. That makes the Los Angeles congresswoman a hero to some and a determined — some say “inflexible” — foe to others. Either way, she is gaining national stature as a comer in Democratic politics.



By Emelyn Rodriguez

As a young girl, Hilda Solis was riveted by stories her father Raul, a Teamsters union steward, told about his dealings with company higher-ups. Each day after work, her father shared with his large, close-knit family, his frustrations, struggles and victories on behalf of laborers, many of whom were Spanish-speaking immigrants. The stories had an indelible impact on Solis, the third of seven children and the first in her family to go to college.

“My father helped to organize a group of factory immigrants and basically helped them get their pensions, better wages and all the safety and protection items they needed to work with in an unsafe environment,” said Solis, now a Democratic congresswoman from El Monte. “He’d come home and tell us about the problems he faced with management. He always reminded us that it was impor-



Hilda Solis receives the Profiles in Courage award from the John F. Kennedy Library, flanked by Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg and U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy (D).

tant to stand up for your rights, and regardless of who you are and where you come from, to hold your head up high with dignity and respect. Those are really important principles that I still carry today."

These lessons learned as a child from her father, a native of Mexico, and her mother, Juana, an assembly-line worker from Nicaragua, have anchored the 44-year-old Capitol Hill dynamo and have helped build the foundation of her barrier-breaking political career. It explains her fervor for workers' rights and her unwavering dedication to issues affecting the underdog. And it accounts for the single-mindedness in Solis' approach that has some of her critics calling her unyielding, unreasonable and anti-business.

But Solis' family life also has kept her grounded and attuned to the values that first attracted her to politics and public service, friends and colleagues say.

"She's real; she's not phony," said Art Torres, chairman of



the California Democratic Party. "I think a lot of that comes from her parents. They have been a very wonderful force in her life. They taught her a lot, especially about the labor movement."

From her early days as a young intern in the Carter White House to her upset victory last year over 18-year incumbent Representative Matthew G. Martinez (D-Monterey Park), which catapulted her to the halls of Congress, Solis has amassed a series of ground-breaking firsts.

Leading the pack

She was the first in her family to earn a college degree. She was the first Latina elected to the California state Senate and, in her first year in Congress, served as freshman class whip for Democrats, responsible for coalescing votes from new lawmakers on key legislation. Solis also is the first female and woman of color to receive the Profiles in Courage Award from the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation in Boston for her work on environmental justice issues.

Speaking from her Washington, D.C., office earlier this year, Solis said that it wasn't easy breaking ahead of the pack. "It's a lot of sacrifice," said the petite, raven-haired lawmaker. "But I think there are a lot of good people who supported me along the way. A lot of it comes from the support that I received from my family and also other community leaders."

Displayed prominently in Solis' D.C. office are framed articles and cover stories about her — from diverse publications such as *George*, *Hispanic* and *People* magazines. There are pictures of Solis with Democratic leaders like Al Gore and California Lieutenant Governor Cruz Bustamante. On one wall is a painting of the Capitol dome framed by the San Gabriel Mountains — a piece she commissioned to remind her of her district, her roots. On another corner is a framed poster of the late labor leader Cesar Chavez, scrawled with a dedication by his widow Helen, stating, "Hilda, thank you for your many contributions to the farm worker movement. Viva la causa!"

Solis, an outspoken, unabashed liberal, credits role models like labor activists Delores Huerta and Chavez of the United Farm Workers union, who helped inspire her. Huerta, for instance, "would just keep fighting and fighting for the underdog," she said. "And that taught me a lot. The discipline that she has. It's just incredible. ...So people like that I run into inspire me, and I connect with them. And it's good because then you can help to share that with other people and hopefully motivate them to get involved as



Solis waits to speak at a Washington, D.C. conference on California energy problems

well, to take that extra risk."

Indeed, it is this willingness to go out on a limb — for causes and issues dear to her heart — that has formed the hallmark of Solis' political career. Although merely a freshman in Congress, Solis has already established a substantial political record in state and local politics.

After earning a bachelor's degree in political science from California Polytechnic University, Pomona, and while working on her master's degree in public administration from the University of Southern California, Solis served in the White House Office of Hispanic Affairs during the Carter administration. She later worked as an analyst for the U.S. Office of Management and Budget in Washington, D.C.

Her first foray into elected office was a stint on the Rio Hondo Community College Board of Trustees from 1985 to 1992. In 1991, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina appointed her to serve on the Los Angeles County Insurance Commission. Solis later won election to the state



Solis with a group of teens

Assembly in 1992, emphasizing a platform that centered on environmental protection, education, labor and women's rights. She was elected to the state Senate in 1994 and became the first Latina in the upper house, and at age 37, the state's youngest senator. She easily won re-election in 1998.

Challenging Martinez

In 2000, she went head-to-head against veteran incumbent Martinez for his seat in the 31st Congressional District, a largely working-class area stretching from East Los Angeles to Azusa where Latinos make up half the voters. Martinez was considered vulnerable because he was viewed as lackluster, if not inattentive and ineffective. Solis had the backing of her core group of supporters — a coalition of labor, environmental and women's groups (including the national Democratic, pro-choice group, EMILY's List — but some politicians (particularly incumbent lawmakers) criticized Solis for targeting a colleague to further her own career.

In the end, a tenacious Solis stunned many with her surprising 62 percent to 29 percent primary election victory. Because the district is heavily Democratic (no Republican even bothered to run), Solis was assured victory in the November general election. For his part, Martinez was so incensed that he became a Republican for the very short remainder of his career.

"Frankly, when she first announced her intention to run for Congress, people thought she was a long shot," said David Allgood, Southern California director of the California League of Conservation Voters, which endorsed Solis. "She took on an incumbent who was well-known and had a long history. But clearly on policy and skills as a legislator, she had it all over him. She did a masterful job of talking about the issues."

During her tenure in state government, Solis was a vigorous advocate of women's rights, working families and environmental protection. She authored a number of bills addressing domestic violence (16 of which were signed into law), spousal rape, women's health, raising the minimum wage and increasing environmental protection. Her bill, SB 115, dubbed the "environmental justice bill," was intended to protect poor and minority neighborhoods from environmental pollution and other toxic hazards. It later garnered her the JFK Profiles in Courage award and increased her national visibility.

Solis said she was inspired to write the groundbreaking environmental legislation after witnessing how her own blue-collar, heavily minority community in San Gabriel Valley became devastated by pollution. The area contains eight gigantic garbage dumps (including Puente Hills, reportedly the biggest landfill west of the Mississippi), hundreds of acres of rock mining pits and the contami-



Hilda Solis

Age 44

Home El Monte

Education

B.A. political science, California State Polytechnic University, 1979
M.A. public administration, University of Southern California, 1981

Career

Member of Congress, 31st District, 2001-present
State Senate 24th District, 1994-2000
Assembly 57th District, 1992-94
Rio Hondo Community College Trustee, 1985-92
Field rep for Assemblyman Art Torres, 1982
Office of Management and Budget in D.C., 1981-82
Editor, Office of Hispanic Affairs at the White House, 1981-82
Interpreter, INS, Los Angeles, 1980-81

Family

Married to business owner Sam H. Sayyad

nation of the nearby San Gabriel Basin by perchlorate, a toxic rocket-fuel additive.

Solis, however, wasn't always successful, especially with some of her more controversial, hard-fought efforts. For instance, her bill attempting to raise the minimum wage was vetoed in 1995 by then-Governor Pete Wilson. But with the support of organized labor and a \$50,000 contribution from Solis' own campaign war chest, she led the victorious effort to pass Proposition 210, a ballot initiative which increased the minimum wage from \$4.25 to \$5.75 an hour.

Her first attempt to push through the environmental justice bill failed after Wilson vetoed it in 1997. She subsequently wrote a weaker version of the bill, which required local governments to consider existing pollutants and the impact of new development projects — such as waste dumps or other hazard-producing industries — on local communities. Governor Gray Davis signed this measure into law in 1999. It is considered the first law of its kind in the country.

"Her bills weren't as strong as she wanted to pass, but they were certainly important first steps," said Allgood.

Art Pulaski, executive officer with the California Labor Federation, called Solis "a warrior for working families." He added, "She is a true believer. I've found her to be someone of high integrity who acts on closely held personal values even at times when it is risky. She is not one who takes a poll, senses the direction of the wind and follows. She stays true to her values. She is a true leader."

A captive of labor, environmental interests?

But Solis' convictions have irked conservative colleagues who view her as a captive to labor and environmental interests, unwilling to hear opposing perspectives. Senator Ray Haynes (R-Riverside), for instance, said in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, that when it comes to labor and environmental concerns, Solis "will carry their water, no matter what."

Fred Main, senior vice president of the California Chamber of Commerce, said that Solis is perceived in some circles as anti-business. "She carried a lot of bills that were anti-business in our view and did so for several years in a row," he said. "A number of [her] bills represented significant cost increases to the business community." He added, "She was a studious, committed legislator. She just had a different view of the world."



Solis holds a press conference with Latinos.

But colleagues and supporters brush aside the criticism, saying that Solis listens and works well with a variety of interest groups.

"She has support in her community in the business sector and strong support from labor and environmental sectors, so she has that balance," said Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina, who met Solis about 15 years ago while engaged in community activism on education and women's issues. "She is looked upon as someone with high integrity. ...She is probably one of the most innovative legislators. She is very persistent and dedicated to serving people. She is always able to find a creative way to get to her goals."

Senator Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles), whom Solis endorsed to fill her seat in the upper house, said that the congresswoman "brings passion, integrity, a fighting spirit — really a warrior spirit."

"In many ways, she represents the 'New California,'" Romero added. "She's a woman, a Latina from a union household, the daughter of immigrants. She brings a vision of the American dream. She cares about democracy. She cares about representation. To her, it's public service. To her, it's fighting to give voice to those who have not been represented."

A rude awakening

In her first year in the nation's capital, Solis is studying the landscape, picking her fights and trying to adjust to life under a GOP-controlled House. "It's very different from when I used to live here 20 years ago," said Solis. "And obviously, there are a lot of changes here in terms of who's running the White House, who's running Congress. And that has been quite an awakening. A rude awakening."



Solis with Mexic in President Vicente Fox

For now, Solis sees her role as defensive, akin to damage control. "I see myself really trying to combat some of these egregious bills that I think would have a negative impact for Californians and for people in my district," she said, referring to President George W. Bush's tax cut plan and the erosion of some worker safety and ergonomics regulations. "The most recent one is the tax cut, and going home and explaining that to people has been a challenge. ...But I think the public does understand that these cuts are going to weigh heavily on them for years to come and there are going to be a lot of negative impacts as a result of that." She cites cuts in social services and other programs.

Solis, who serves on the House Education and Workforce Committee and the Resources Committee, plans to continue her focus on education, environmental and labor issues. She is also interested in delving into health care, social security and veteran's affairs.

These days, she is enveloped in the typical whirlwind schedule of a new member. On one particularly dreary and overcast spring day, Solis flitted from engagement to engagement, including several hearings and a brief press conference in which lawmakers appealed to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to more strongly regulate wholesale power generators and the energy prices they charge.

Solis did not speak during the half-hour press event, instead deferring to her more senior colleagues. She did, however, pose for a series of publicity shots, appearing only in the background. She later hurriedly departed to cast votes on a series of measures, then reappeared nearly an hour later to do a satellite-feed interview in English and Spanish for local television stations. Meanwhile, she had two visitors with appointments waiting in her office.

"It's hectic today, but it was even worse the other day," observed Solis' communications director, Randy Jurado Ertll.

Although still a congressional newcomer, Solis is distinguishing herself. In January 2001, *National Journal* maga-

zine named her among its "Ten Freshmen to Watch," stating that her election "is a sign of things to come in California and a generational changing of the guard in the Hispanic Caucus."

Representative Loretta Sanchez (D-Santa Ana), a colleague and early supporter of Solis', said that fellow lawmakers are stopping her on the House floor saying, "This woman's great. Where did you find her?"

Even national Democratic leaders look favorably upon Solis, said California Democratic Party chairman Torres. "They recognize the star quality that she has. She can cross the party line. ...My hope is that we can win back the House in 2002, and Hilda can play an important role. It can be an opportunity for her to rise up in the ranks."

For now, more mundane matters take precedence. Solis is spending time networking and meeting other members, getting settled in her committees, learning from senior legislators and flying home most weekends to her district to spend time with constituents, friends, family members and her business-owner husband, Sam Sayyad.

"For me, it's important to focus on getting the feel of the place and letting members know who I am," Solis said. Even so, "you'd be surprised how many people do know who I am. Even the Republicans." 

Emelyn Rodriguez is a senior editor of California Journal. Comments on this story may be emailed to edit@statenet.com

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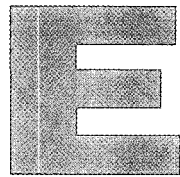
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Women unhappy with new district



Every step in the career of Assemblywoman Helen Thomson suggests an elected official carefully honing her policy savvy, then moving up to higher office only when ready. In 1974, while the mother of young children, the Democrat from the small northern California town of Davis — like many women of her generation — quietly entered politics via a stint on her local school board. After three terms, she embraced the wider reaches of local government, winning a seat on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. She slowly expanded her political horizons over 12 years before landing in the Assembly, where the former nurse chairs the Assembly Health Committee.

After 27 years in elected office, Thomson hasn't lost her appetite for public service. But her next logical step up has been cut off by the 2001

Over the last two decades, women legislators increased their power inside the Capitol, sponsoring important bills, chairing key committees and flexing political muscle on par with their male counterparts. But women have yet to break into the inner sanctum in one all-important arena — redistricting — and the result may reduce their numbers.

redistricting plan. Thomson had hoped to succeed Senator Maurice Johannessen (R-Redding), but the recent redrawing of districts put her Yolo County base in the district already held by a fellow Democrat — Senator Mike Machado of Linden. Thomson thus faces a difficult choice: move or challenge Machado. And even that latter scenario is complicated by the fact that Machado doesn't face voters again until 2004 — two years after Thomson will have been termed out of the Assembly. Two years out of office is an eternity in today's political climate, especially when a lawmaker must run against an incumbent from her own party in a district largely made up of unfamiliar territory.

"I kick myself that I didn't organize a women's caucus in the early stages of the redistricting process, and for not hiring legal and map consultants like many congressional members did," Thomson laments in retrospect. "That was a mistake on the part of women."

Thomson says she was caught off guard after observing the openness and *esprit de corps* with which the Assembly pieced together its new districts. Confident that the process would be no different in the Senate, she and other Assembly women never bothered to inject themselves into the day-to-day mapping effort in the upper house. They took to heart

By Kathleen Les

patterns



Illustration by Sandra Hoover

assurances by Senate leaders such as President pro Tempore John Burton (D-San Francisco) that a joint hearing to scrutinize Assembly and Senate maps would be held before final floor votes were taken.

New- and old-school politics

But redistricting was not conducted the same way in the Senate as it was in the Assembly, Thomson and others

separated and that fewer women will have the chance to move into the Senate. That same concern caused the area's current senator — termed-out Jack O'Connell (D-San Luis Obispo) — to vote against the Senate's plan.

"I think the argument can be made that we didn't anticipate we would be ignored," said Jackson. "We thought leadership would be sensitive to the need for gender balance." Today, women hold less a third of the Legislature

"I think the argument can be made that we didn't anticipate we would be ignored. We thought leadership would be sensitive to the need for gender balance."

—Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson

assert. It's a difference, she says, between new-school and old-school politics. In one case, open decision-making and the implication of term limits were the litmus test for each district. In the other, the process smacked of a closed-door, men's network where brokered deals paved the political way for those on the inner circle. It was a circle encompassing no women, either on the conference committee — ultimately scrapped — or at the heart of meetings where the deal was struck to protect Senate incumbents such as Machado.

Thomson never expected a cushy district loaded with Democrats. In fact, she was willing to run in a tougher, more competitive district, confident that her work on farm and water issues would help bridge the divide between district Republicans and Democrats. The irony is that

Thomson now is blocked in a solid Democratic district.

Thomson is not the only Assemblywoman with dashed Senate hopes. Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson (D-Santa Barbara) found her coastal Senate district severed in two, with her hometown of Santa Barbara landing in the Republican half now occupied by conservative Republican Senator Tom McClintock (R-Thousand Oaks). Jackson is frustrated that Central Coast communities with shared political interests have been

but make up half the state's population. Jackson hoped — and expected — the present ratio of women legislators would be the floor, not the ceiling, in coming years.

Taking care of themselves

The new districts affect the careers of other female Democratic Assembly members besides Thomson and Jackson. Fresno's Sarah Reyes was aced out of a district in favor of Assemblyman Dean Florez (D-Shafter). Freshmen Carol Liu of Pasadena and Jackie Goldberg of Los Angeles both landed in the 21st Senate District, already occupied by Senator Jack Scott (D-Altadena), who, like Machado, is not termed out until 2008. And Democrat Rebecca Cohn of Saratoga now resides in a Senate district made safe for a Republican.

None of these women believes the outcome was intentionally directed at their gender. Nor do they believe political retribution was involved. Although all are progressive Democrats who have had their scrapes with leadership, so too have several male legislators who were treated better in redistricting. It's more basic than that, say the women.

It's as simple as what happens when women are denied a seat at the table. Men control the four primary leadership positions (president pro tempore, Assembly speaker and majority leaders of the Senate and Assembly), and so exercise control over redistricting. When men are in charge, the inevitable happens, said Jackson. "The guys took care of themselves."

Burton did not return phone calls for this story, but in a prepared statement issued early in September, the Senate leader said, "I believe everyone would agree maintaining a Democratic majority is more important to advancing women's issues than the political aspirations of any one individual."

As to the charge that women were given short shrift, Burton wrote, "In fact, many more women legislators have



Assemblywoman Hannah-Beth Jackson

Left to right:
Assemblywomen
Jackie Goldberg,
Rebecca Cohn and
Carol Liu



been strengthened and protected by the Senate restricting plan." He cited Assemblymembers

Pat Wiggins (D-Santa Rosa) and Jenny Oropeza (D-Long Beach) and former member Denise Ducheny (D-San Diego), among others.

The 2001 redistricting was an exercise in protecting the status quo—a strategy agreed upon by both Democrats and Republicans. As a result, the two legislative caucuses agreed to a plan that preserved the current partisan split: 50-to-30 in the Assembly and 26-to-14 in the Senate. Democrats, who may have been able to add a few more seats with more creative map-making, agreed to the deal to head off a potentially lethal Republican challenge in the courts. Republicans went along because the new scheme kept their numbers from eroding further and because Democrats controlled the entire redistricting process—including the governor's office.

In the Senate, the process was controlled lock, stock and ink barrel by Burton. The Assembly had hegemony over its own districts but precious little leverage when it came to crafting those for the upper house. Essentially, Assembly Speaker Bob Hertzberg (D-Los Angeles) used what little clout he had to ensure a district for one of his closest allies—Assemblyman Dennis Cardoza (D-Merced). It was insistence on the latter, in particular, that generated the biggest ripple effect in re-jiggering the Senate maps—an insistence that Hertzberg himself tosses off as "just a rumor."

Good-old-boy politics

Rumor or no, crafting a safe district for Cardoza changed the outline of Senate districts up and down the state and particularly affected those important to several Democratic assemblywomen. After all that trouble and machination, however, Cardoza became the political equivalent of "The Man Who Wasn't There," passing on

the Senate campaign to challenge instead for the congressional seat held by his former boss, Democrat Gary Condit.

Though women's numbers have increased in the Legislature in the last 20 years, giving them a significant voice in the Capitol, the political business of reshaping maps again was corralled by men. And women were left mostly in the dark until it was too late to kick up much protest.

"Reapportionment is definitely the last vestige of good old boy politics," said Craig Reynolds, a legislative veteran and chief of staff to Thomson. "The women weren't organized in terms of having a plan or advocacy effort on their behalf like minority groups.

"The reapportionment game is pure politics, gamesmanship, trickery and calculus, qualities that really aren't the forte of women," noted Reynolds, who would have liked his boss to move to the Senate. Backroom deal-making isn't generally a skill-set women come by naturally, he contends, and it isn't necessarily a political style to which they aspire.

Women readily admit their interests lean toward policy over politics. "Women tend to be more consensus-oriented, to get along and [organize] around issues as opposed to politics," said Assemblywoman Liu. "We really try to build bridges."

More often than not, women enter politics to shape policy, men for the power, say women observing the working differences between the two sexes in the Capitol. And with the two contrasting styles, it's not surprising that each might gravitate to working with their own kind. "It may be that men in the upper echelons of power are still more comfortable with men, and that's who tend to be their friends," surmised David Binder, a Democratic pollster in San Francisco. When something like redistricting comes around, he suggested, those at the head of the pack naturally lend a hand to their closest allies, who happen to be men.

Working the ambitions of 50 Democratic Assembly members into 26 Democratic Senate seats has its challenges and its limitations, insisted one staffer close to the process. But over and over, female legislators, in particular, wonder why the Senate and congressional map-making process was so sequestered.

"There was no discussion between our house and their house, and decisions were thrust upon us," said Assemblywoman Reyes, now in a new Senate enclave that contains only a portion of her present Assembly district. Others tell of Senate and congressional maps being revealed in iso-

"In redistricting, it never pays to be passive."

— Bruce Cain, director,
Institute for Governmental Studies

lated, one-on-one meetings without benefit of looking at redrawn maps in the context of the state as a whole, presumably to minimize comparisons and complaints.

Not enough resistance

Why didn't women put up more resistance by collectively holding the Senate and congressional maps hostage with a refusal to vote on passage until lines were adjusted to their satisfaction?

"In redistricting, it never pays to be passive," pointed out Bruce Cain, a redistricting expert and director of the Institute for Governmental Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. Cain wonders why the women would have dropped their defenses during the all-important redistricting. If legislative leaders had been typically gender



Assemblywomen Helen Thomson (left) and Sarah Reyes (right)

blind in the last few years, that would have been reason to keep close watch. But few are accusing Burton or other legislative leaders of sexism.

The women, of course, weren't the only group grumpy with the new districts. Some Latinos were disgruntled enough to file a lawsuit over four congressional districts, while Assemblyman Fred Keeley (D-Santa Cruz) ended up the biggest casualty in the effort to accommodate Cardoza.

When Senate map-makers pulled heavily Democratic Monterey County out of the old 15th Senate District and appended it to the new 12th Senate District, Keeley saw his Senate ambitions dashed. "Creating a seat for Cardoza caused a series of cascading events that have brought heartache to several Assembly members," he insisted.

To be sure, not every woman was treated badly and several will climb the political ladder to the Senate. But the fact remains that more women than men took a hit on their Senate aspirations. The lesson learned, say those denied an assist into higher office, is the importance of being part of the team handing out the spoils.

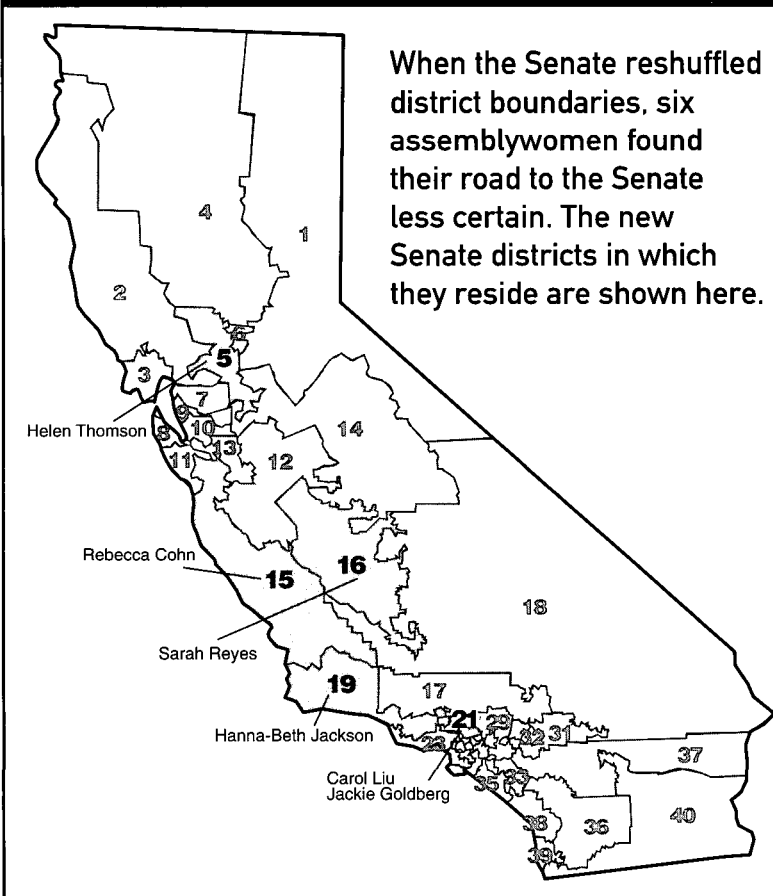
Even with advances in technology that allow ordinary citizens a crack at drawing maps, reapportionment will likely remain an insider game controlled by key legislative leaders. Except for one brief period this decade, those leaders were all men. Ten years from now, perhaps, key leadership posts will rest with women, affording the opportunity to raise the bar on female representation.

As for Thomson, she has filed to run for a seat on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors. The remaining women will bide their time in the Assembly before deciding their next move. 🏛️

Kathleen Les is an associate editor of California Journal. Comments on this article may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

The questionable districts

When the Senate reshuffled district boundaries, six assemblywomen found their road to the Senate less certain. The new Senate districts in which they reside are shown here.



Clout in the Southland

Ask political junkies to identify the most powerful woman in California politics, and one name dominates: U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein — followed by Senator Barbara Boxer and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, newly elected minority whip of the House. All are Democrats.

What else do these women have in common?

All hold significant "positional power" and serve unencumbered by term limits. That has allowed them to gain seniority and influence within their legislative houses, while solidifying their home base. And they are *not* from Southern California, where roughly three-fifths of the state's voters reside.

Accruing political clout is especially difficult in the Southland because the region is so diverse. It lacks a hierarchical political structure and a deep-rooted political culture; power centers are ethnically and racially based, community-defined. Only politicians who can move beyond those constraints, as Governor Gray Davis did, can build the broad-based coalitions necessary to win high office and exert wide influence.

State Controller Kathleen Connell, who calls Los Angeles home, is the region's only statewide female officeholder. But she will soon be term-ed out of office, and she finished sixth in Los Angeles' 2001 mayoral primary.

City Controller Laura Chick is the first woman in Los Angeles history elected citywide. But she's in a low-wattage office and, although a likely mayoral candidate, she had greater clout as a City Council member from potent San Fernando Valley.

Janice Hahn, newly elected Los Angeles councilwoman, has surfaced as a power player. Hahn chairs the Committee on Education & Neighborhoods, which oversees the city's new Neighborhood Councils, and is vice chair of the committee that oversees the Port of Los Angeles, LAX and the Department of Water & Power. She also is the sister of Mayor Jim Hahn. On local matters, that gives her power — both real and perceived.

Two Democratic women wield "derivative power" because of their proximity to Governor Davis. Chief of Staff Lynn Schenk, the first woman elected to Congress from San Diego, has been dubbed "deputy governor." First Lady Sharon Davis is the governor's advisor and sounding board, as well as a messenger on issues important to his agenda.

Nancy Daly Riordan has influence in her own right on children's issues and in philanthropic circles, but her role in the career of husband Richard Riordan gives her political clout.

The women mentioned most frequently as Southland powers serve in Congress and on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, which have not been term limited. State legislators were largely overlooked. Said one analyst, "Term limits have reshaped the definition of power."

Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, an African American, is the first woman or minority ever to serve as an L.A. County supervisor. Gloria Molina is the first Latina elected to the board. Once called "The Five Little Kings," members are arguably the most powerful local officials in California. Burke and Molina can get things done. Both have been on the scene for a long time and have each nurtured a "political family." One of Burke's political legacies is Assembly Speaker-to-be Herb Wesson (D-Culver City).

Two Democratic congresswomen also stand out. Maxine Waters is a veteran Southland player; her clout begins with a strong political base in the African-American

community. But, as one observer put it, Waters "is powerful as much for what she stops, as for what she does." Jane Harman has gained increased prominence as the ranking Democrat on the new House Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security. She also has money to bankroll campaigns.

There is a dearth of Republicans among the Southland's powerful women — a GOP problem throughout the state. The party's stances on social issues, and its conservative, white male image, are out of sync with most California women.

What does it take to be a powerful political woman? Exactly what it takes to be a powerful political man: The ability to impact politics and policy; to lead and to have followers in the political arena; to hold an office inherently powerful; to get others elected; to be, as one observer put it, the person "to 'go to' in the public arena, who can make or break you." Although the Southland has yet to produce a Feinstein, many of its political women fit that mold. 🏛️

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe is a senior scholar at USC's School of Policy, Planning & Development. Comments may be sent to edit@statenet.com.

There is a
dearth of
Republicans
among the
Southland's
powerful women.

by Sherry
Bebitch Jeffe



Midge Costanza: Women's liaison

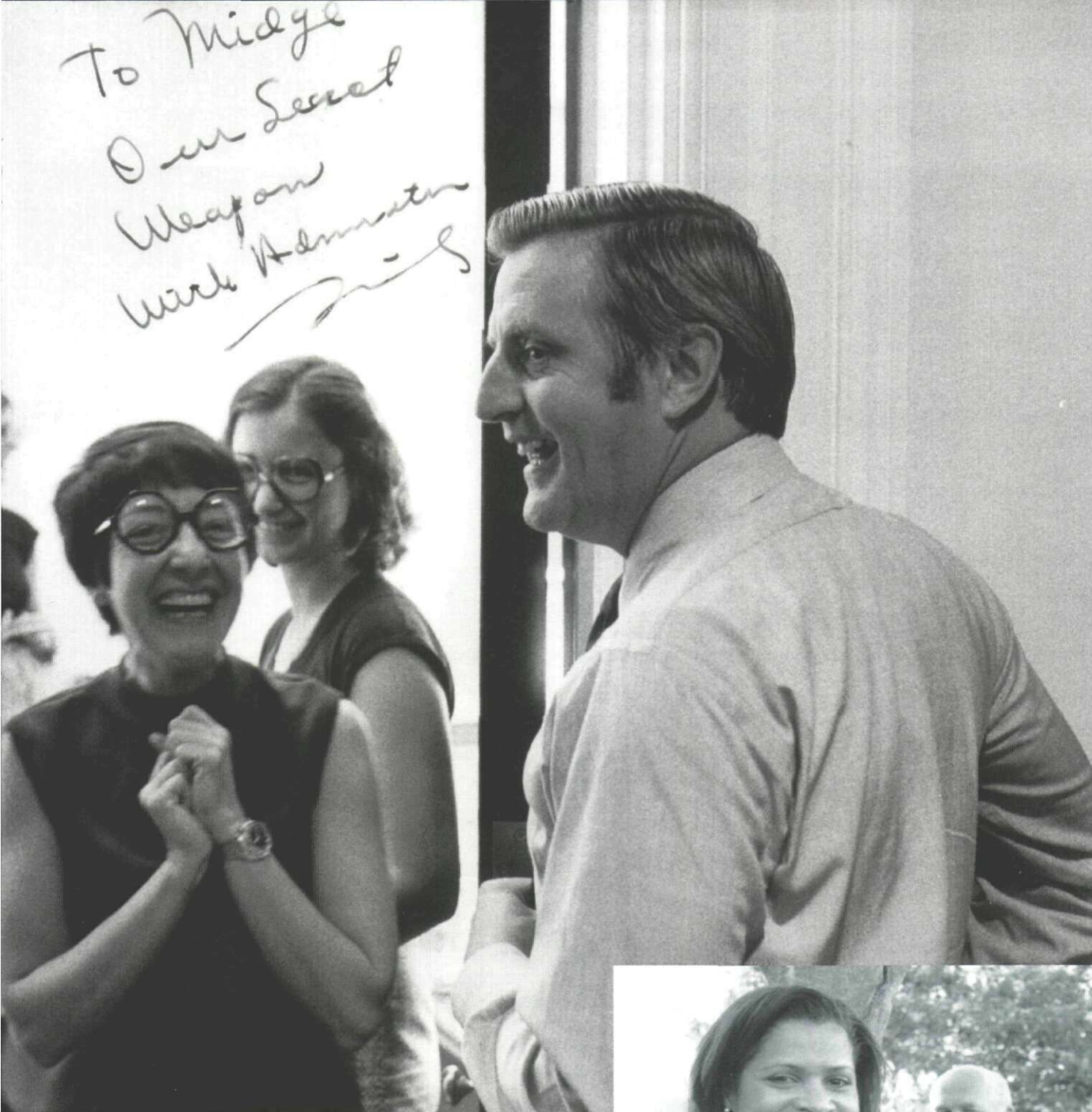
A former vice mayor of Rochester, New York, and later a top aide to President Jimmy Carter, Midge Costanza has a new political mission in California: helping Governor Gray Davis reach out to women voters. She aims to make women the deciding edge in Davis' re-election bid.



By Philip
J. LaVelle

The first half of the Carter administration was a heady time for Margaret "Midge" Costanza. As Jimmy Carter's top domestic aide, Costanza had an office next to the Oval Office, instructions from the president to call him "Jimmy" and a mission to give the American people a portal into the White House.

It was quite a ride for this politician from upstate New York. The scrappy, five-foot-tall Costanza deployed her rapier wit at will, to the delight of reporters and political columnists — and to the growing discomfort of Carter's inner circle. She was an unflagging advocate for abortion and gay rights, publicly criticized Carter on the B-1 bomber and neutron bomb, and opened the White House to the downtrodden.



(Above) Midge Costanza with President Jimmy Carter and Vice President Walter Mondale, 1978. Carter just announced he would not support further development of the B-1 Bomber, which Costanza actively worked against via the "Women's Strike for Peace." Carter's note in the photo reads: "To Midge, our secret weapon, with admiration." (Right) Costanza with Ylisa Sanford Seymour at a recent speech Costanza gave before the Association of California Commissions for Women in Sonoma County.

She was popular with the people but also accumulated palace critics, especially when a quip to a local TV reporter — that embattled-Carter-aide Bert Lance should resign — made the network feed. Twenty months into the job, with Carter aides fretting about how the Midge factor could hurt Carter's re-election chances, Costanza took stock and resigned. Exiting the national spotlight, she went West to



manage actress Shirley MacLaine's "Higher Self" seminars; observers of the day said what passed for wit in the Carter administration went with her.

Nearly a quarter-century later, at age 69, Costanza is experiencing a *déjà vu* of sorts, serving once again as a link between a chief executive and the governed. Since February, she has worked as Governor Gray Davis' special liaison for women's groups and issues. She says her current mission is not unlike the one Carter handed her.

"My job was to open up the White House to the people of the United States," she said.

Today her job is to penetrate the sentiments of California women. A San Diego County resident, Costanza earns \$52,000 a year, has a shoestring budget and works out of Davis' small field office in downtown San Diego. She says she can do her job economically through e-mail and a string of conferences to begin early next year.

Conferences, however, initially slated for last summer, were delayed by her unexpected colon cancer surgery in September. She says she is making a quick recovery and will launch her conferences in January.

On a mission

Costanza said Davis gave her a simple task: "The governor wants to know what the people of this state are thinking, so he said to me, 'Find out!'"

Political analysts see political calculation as well. Hiring Costanza, they say, is a bid by Davis to energize his base with activist feminists, a constituency that holds Costanza, a pioneer feminist, in high regard.

"She's a great feminist," said Helen Grieco, executive director of the California National Organization for Women. "We're just thrilled that he would pick a woman like her to do his liaison work. She has a longstanding history of understanding and working for women's issues."

Davis hired Costanza "for the right reasons," Grieco continued. "Women helped put him into office and he owes us." NOW's California chapter thinks so highly of Costanza, it plans to ask her to be keynote speaker at its annual convention next April in San Diego, Grieco said.

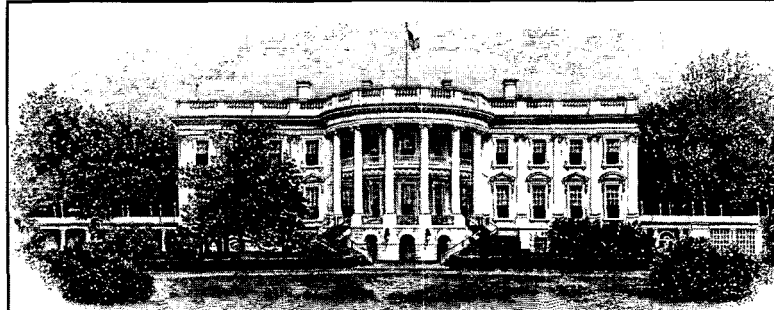
They are not likely to be disappointed, Costanza's friends say.

"She has an overall kind of umbrella talent that sees all of the agendas beneath the umbrella," MacLaine said from her home in New Mexico. "She's got her ear to the ground, but also her eye to a higher purpose."

"If you ever need somebody to really whip up a crowd, she's got it," said former UPI White House correspondent Helen Thomas, now a columnist with Hearst Newspapers. "She's got a great sense of humanity and a warmth that is unexcelled. I've never seen this woman fail in a crowd."

Governor needs help

Davis may need a crowd-pleaser. A late-September Field Poll put his approval rating at 41 percent and showed him in a statistical dead heat with former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, the leading GOP candidate. If Riordan wins the March GOP primary, Davis' political life



"I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them and with a courage to make themselves vulnerable that I find moving beyond words."

Gloria Steinem, 1971

To Midge Costanza,

The courageous woman who brought feminism, compassion and the people's issues into the White House.

*from her friends and sisters
Washington, October 12, 1978*

(Top) With Shirley MacLaine in 1978 at the premier of "Turning Point," attended by congressional members and staff. (Above) In tribute to her work with Jimmy Carter friends gave Costanza this reproduction of the White House inscribed with this quote by Gloria Steinem, "I have met brave women who are exploring the outer edge of human possibility, with no history to guide them and with courage to make themselves vulnerable that I find moving beyond words."

is likely to get complicated; Riordan is financially competitive with Davis, and he's pro-choice.

"A more moderate Republican muddies the water," said Terry Christensen, chairman of the political science department at San Jose State University. "Riordan could pull more women voters because he's not driving them away on a matter like choice."

"The Carter administration was a while ago," Christensen continued. "She may not have any resonance with twenty-something dot-com'ers in San Francisco, who probably don't even perceive themselves as feminists." But with feminist groups, he thinks she would be a good and credible presence, which could be important in an election environment with little room for error. "Picking up just a few extra percentage points of lead with women voters can be the margin of victory," he said.

Jack Pitney, professor of government at Claremont McKenna College near Los Angeles, also thinks Costanza's appeal is narrow. "Kind of an odd pick, because if you're

primarily interested in reaching California women of the 21st century, you sort of wonder about picking somebody whose main prominence came more than two decades ago," he said. "It's just a name I hadn't heard in quite a while. I'm sure I could give it on an exam and nobody would get it -- most of my students were born in 1983."

Pitney said picking Costanza is part of a broader Davis bid to reinforce his liberal Democratic base. "You saw in his



In Rochester, New York, meeting Carter's plane as he campaigns in 1976

last flurry of bill signings a tendency to favor the liberal side of the equation," he said, noting legislation such as the new law expanding the reach of the state's "domestic partners" law.

Women make the difference

"Clearly the governor is gearing up for his re-election, and a critical constituency for any Democrat is women," said Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, senior scholar at the University of Southern California's School of Policy, Planning and Development and a contributing editor to *California Journal*. "It should be no surprise that any Democratic governor, particularly in California, would have a liaison to women, just as he would have one to African Americans, to Latinos, to business. The question is, who is the right person to be the liaison to each of those communities?"

Jeffe noted that while Costanza's weakness may be that Gen X'ers have no idea who she is, her strength is her feminist legacy.

Costanza's resume' is filled with feminist firsts: first woman elected to the Rochester, New York, City Council; first woman elected that city's vice mayor, and first woman to hold the title "assistant to the president." (Frances Perkins, a labor secretary under Franklin D. Roosevelt, was the first female cabinet member.) Costanza also hoisted an impressive load for the Democratic Party, managing Rob-

ert F. Kennedy's upstate New York Senate campaign and co-managing Carter's 1976 presidential campaign for New York State.

"She was a political power in upstate New York," said feminist Gloria Steinem. "She was one of the rare — at the time, much more rare — women in political office, and she was very encouraging to other women and very active in opening up the political process. And she was a bridge between the more conventional world of politics and social-justice movements during the Carter administration."

Stormy days with Carter

At times, her efforts caused presidential heartburn. One incident particularly incensed Carter. "All the peace groups used to write to me. Women's groups for peace did this post card campaign," Costanza recalled. Thousands of post cards came in, and Costanza dumped the mail sacks in the Oval Office.

When Carter asked what they were, she replied: "The people!"

It did not go over well. "You know that little vein on his temple that people used to refer to? Let me say, it was throbbing. I got out of there pretty quickly."

Life got tamer after she left Washington. She lived in Los Angeles for several years, working for MacLaine and as a talent coordinator. She moved to San Diego County in 1990, and in 1992 managed Barbara Boxer's U.S. Senate campaign there. She's been active in local politics, serving on several civic boards and coaching candidates on their speaking and presentation skills.

She calls Carter a friend, but it is easy to detect disappointment in her White House recollections. "When he asked me to go to Washington, I thought that he and I were going to put on red capes, go to the roof of the White House, yell, 'Shazam!' and save the whole world. Well, apparently I'm the only one who jumped!"

She sees an easier go of it in these post-feminist times.

The conferences Costanza conducts for Davis will be tailored to questionnaires she is collecting from nearly 2,000 women's groups and business associations. The first conference will key on health care, with future issues to range from small business to education to domestic violence, she said.

"We want to hear from women," she said. "We're not going there to say how perfectly great we are. We're going to ask, 'Have you run into any difficulties; can we be doing it better?' If you get a whole bunch of women from the domestic violence arena into one room, they might say, 'That's good, but...' That's what we want, the 'but.'"

"I don't have to go to the roof of the Capitol in Sacramento and jump," she said. "My work with this governor is not to blaze new trails but to take the trails he's already laid out and get the word to the people that it affects, and that's women." 🏠

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Laura Bush

Long is the road Laura Bush has traveled since the day she made her husband swear she would never have to give a political speech. Not only does she give speeches, and lots of them, the First Lady talks live with CNN's Larry King. She appears on Oprah. She stands up before enormous luncheon crowds and makes jokes.

Today, with the country at war against terrorist networks responsible for attacks on the Pentagon and World Trade Center, the First Lady has adopted her most visible role yet since moving into the White House last January. One wishes she had adopted it sooner, since it seems clear Laura Bush could teach her husband a thing or two about composure.

Modeling calm for Americans still afraid to enter tall buildings and to board airplanes, Laura Bush refused vaccinations to protect her against biological weapons when they were offered, saying she didn't think them necessary. While her husband zig-zagged across the country to dodge potential assassins on D-Day, she told interviewers she doesn't dwell much on her personal safety. As if to lead by example, the former elementary school teacher and librarian quickly resumed her own schedule sponsoring book festivals, raising money for libraries and speaking about early cognitive development.

"An act of terror is meant to undermine a country, make us feel vulnerable, make us be afraid," Mrs. Bush told CNN's King in October. "And what happened instead, I think, is it made us realize how strong we are and how unified we are as a country. I want to get across the message that I think people need to go about their daily lives and start feeling secure again."

She hugged victims' relatives at funerals and visited the hospital beds of those hurt at the Pentagon. She appeared on talk shows with advice on helping kids cope with tragedy and told grieving New York firefighters that "the whole nation is behind you."

Laura Bush has a way of carrying herself, and whatever you call it — serene, composed, a "sense of self" — some experts believe it gives Americans more confidence in the presidency than the president does. When it sometimes becomes too embarrassing to listen to him — with cheesy, Wild West references to a "dead or alive" Osama bin Laden and grade-school-like explanations about

the U.S. offensive in Afghanistan — it is helpful to look to her.

Last month, as her husband and Mexico President Vicente Fox answered reporters' questions in the Rose Garden and Vice President Dick Cheney rushed by in the background, Laura Bush leaned against a wall in an alcove off the garden, her arms crossed, watching quietly. She is often described as comfortable in her skin, not bent on proving herself. In a town consumed by image, her demeanor is quietly stoic and her manner empathetic — much like that of another First Lady named Bush.

"People like her," said Lewis Gould, a Texas scholar and author of "American First Ladies."

"The way she looks, her experience as a teacher... she conveys an image of stability and calm, and I think those are qualities people want to see at this time... somewhat in contrast to her more frenetic husband."

Her more frenetic husband last year often told voters how Laura Bush led him to a deeper understanding of God, and how she encouraged him to stop drinking. Few may know that Mrs. Bush's Methodist faith was deepened when, as a teen-ager, she was in a car crash that killed a good friend.

Unlike modern contemporaries who were in the White House when America went to war overseas — Pat

Nixon during Vietnam, Barbara Bush during the Gulf War — Laura Bush is First Lady at a time when "acts of war" — as her husband described the terrorist attacks — happened on U.S. soil. Even the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor seemed distant to many Americans because it was not on the continental United States, Gould said.

In this sense, Laura Bush's only real role models are people like Dolly Madison, who — in 1812 as the British approached — refused to leave the White House until she rescued George Washington's portrait from the wall.

"War, alas, came to Mrs. Bush, and what she is dealing with is something that hasn't existed since Dolly Madison or Mary Todd Lincoln — having casualties and the need for comfort here [in America]," Gould said. "It really has been unprecedented for 135 years." 🏛️

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by Dana Wilkie



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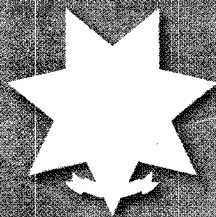
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